THE APOCALYPSE OF SAINT JOHN

The Interpretation of the Venerable
Bartholomew Holzhauser

BIOGRAPHY AND CHAPTERS 1-15

English translation from Canon de Wuilleret's French edition
(Paris: Vivès, second edition, 1857)

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Source edition and editorial note

This volume brings together the public English translation archive as it appeared at bartholomewholzhauser.com in July 2026. Holzhauser's surviving commentary ends in Chapter 15. Scripture follows the Douay-Rheims wording, and Psalm numbering follows the Latin Vulgate. Reports of private revelation are presented as historical material and do not constitute a judgment by the Catholic Church.

BIOGRAPHY

Who Was the Venerable Bartholomew Holzhauser?

Bartholomew Holzhauser was a German parish priest, a reformer of the diocesan clergy, a reputed visionary, and the author of what the old French edition of his work calls, without embarrassment, the finest interpretation of the Apocalypse ever written. He was born on 24 August 1613 in Laugna, a small village in the Diocese of Augsburg in Bavaria, and he died on 20 May 1658 at Bingen on the Rhine, in his forty-fifth year, the nineteenth of his priesthood. The Catholic Church has conferred on him the title Venerable, the formal recognition that he practised the Christian virtues to a heroic degree, and his cause for beatification remains open.

His entire life was lived inside the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and its aftermath - the most destructive catastrophe Germany experienced before the twentieth century. He was five years old when it began and thirty-five when it ended. Everything he did, and everything he wrote, must be read against that background: a Catholic Germany devastated by armies, plague, and famine; a clergy demoralised and in many places scandalous; a Church that had lost half the German-speaking world to the Reformation within living memory. Holzhauser's response to that ruin was twofold. As a man of action, he founded an institute to restore the priesthood. As a contemplative, he wrote an interpretation of the Apocalypse in which the whole of Church history - including the ruin he was living through - has its appointed place in the plan of God.

Childhood and Youth

The biographical notice printed at the head of the 1857 French edition of his Interpretation of the Apocalypse, taken from an anonymous life published at Bamberg in 1799, describes his origins simply: a true servant of God, Swabian by birth, born in a humble village a few leagues from Augsburg, in August of the year of grace 1613. His father, Leonard Holzhauser, was a shoemaker; his mother was named Catherine; Bartholomew was one of eleven children of parents remembered as poor, pious, and honest.

There was no school in his hamlet, so as a boy he walked to the school of the neighbouring town of Wertingen, about a league from his father's house, and - the old biography records the detail with evident affection - he used to shorten the road with prayers and holy hymns, "which were his delight." In 1624, at the age of eleven, he began the study of Latin at Augsburg, where his poverty forced him to seek his bread from door to door, singing and begging. During his time at Augsburg he fell gravely ill in an epidemic then raging - he later publicly attributed his deliverance from the plague to the intercession of the Mother of God, for whom he retained the most intense devotion all his life. After his recovery he returned home for a time and helped his father at the cobbler's trade. He then continued his studies at Neuburg on the Danube, where he found a better situation under the protection of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and completed his education at the university town of Ingolstadt, taking the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1636 and pursuing theology, in which he became a licentiate. His teachers, the sources agree, were unanimous in praising his talent, his piety, and his modesty.

The old life insists that from his earliest years he was favoured with heavenly visions, and it draws a portrait of the student he became: mortified, chaste, humble, gentle, patient; ardent

in charity toward the poor although poor himself; careless of danger in bringing help to the victims of the war and the scourges that followed it; teaching Christian doctrine to the ignorant, consoling the afflicted, correcting abuses; and, when he was insulted for it by the wicked, "full of joy at having been found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ."

Priesthood

Holzhauser was ordained a priest in 1639 in the episcopal city of Eichstätt, and celebrated his first Mass at Ingolstadt on Pentecost, in the chapel of Our Lady of Victory - the same chapel where, as a student, he had so often offered his heart to God. He immediately threw himself into the ministry of the confessional, with such success that penitents crowded to him in great numbers.

It was precisely this success that revealed to him the problem that would define his life's work. One holy priest could not renew a devastated Church. Fearing, in the words of the old biography, "to exhaust his strength in the cultivation of the Lord's vineyard," he sought to associate with himself zealous collaborators capable of continuing and propagating the work. Already in 1640, within a year of his ordination, he had persuaded three parish priests senior to himself to adopt a common rule of life with him.

The Bartholomites: Restoring the Priesthood

What grew from that beginning was the Institutum clericorum saecularium in communi viventium - the Institute of Secular Clergy Living in Community - whose members came to be known, after their founder, as the Bartholomites, and in Germany as the "United Brethren." The idea was as simple as it was radical for its time. The disasters of the Thirty Years' War had left faith lukewarm and discipline relaxed, among the clergy as much as the laity. Holzhauser's remedy was not a new religious order but a renewal of the diocesan priesthood itself: secular priests who, without leaving their dioceses or their bishops, would live an apostolic common life, hold their funds in common, keep no female servants in their houses, follow a fixed rule of daily prayer, and bind themselves not by religious vows but by a simple promise of obedience confirmed by oath. The best of them were to be placed as teachers in seminaries, so that a new generation of exemplary priests would be formed, who would in turn join and extend the community.

The foundations came quickly. After an unsuccessful first attempt in the Diocese of Eichstätt, Holzhauser set out on foot for Salzburg - "without a bag, with little money," says the old life, gathering a fourth companion on the road - and there received a warm welcome from the ecclesiastical authorities. He obtained a canonry at Tittmoning, a town of the Archdiocese of Salzburg near the Bavarian border, where he was given charge of souls and acquired a large house for himself and his companions: the very house, the biography notes, that he had seen in a dream while still at Ingolstadt. His first colleagues included priests of noted piety from the Ingolstadt region, and the number of his companions grew from day to day.

On the feast of the Purification of Our Lady in 1642 he took charge of the parish and deanery of St. Johann in the Leukental, a Tyrolean valley on the road between Innsbruck and Salzburg, where he laboured for ten years - catechising children and adults, visiting the schools, restoring ecclesiastical discipline, and relieving the poor with such devotion during the Tyrolean famine of about 1649 that, in the words of the old biography, "his name is still blessed in those mountains." Meanwhile the institutional work advanced: the first seminary of the institute was founded at Salzburg in 1643 and later transferred, for serious reasons, to Ingolstadt in 1649; houses were established at Augsburg, Regensburg, and elsewhere, with the favour of Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, who wrote in 1646 that it had "pleased the divine

goodness to raise up priests whose sole aim is to procure for the Church men who, living according to the rules of the sacred canons and of ecclesiastical discipline, devote themselves entirely and with a pure heart to the priestly functions."

The Church's formal judgment on the institute came after the founder's death, and it is worth recording for what it says about the man. In 1670 the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars declared: "This pious and holy institution has no need of approbation, since it prescribes nothing other than what was practised by the clergy of the primitive Church." Pope Innocent XI formally approved the constitutions of the institute on 17 August 1684. Holzhauser's Constitutiones et exercitia spiritualia, printed at Cologne, Würzburg, Rome, and Mainz across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were used in many seminaries, and - a detail often overlooked - helped spread primary education among the common people, since Holzhauser instructed his priests to establish schools everywhere in which the young would be taught reading, writing, and the rudiments of religion. The Bartholomites spread well beyond Germany before dying out in the upheavals of the early nineteenth century, and the epitaph on their founder's tomb fixes his achievement in a single phrase: restorer, in upper Germany, of the common life of the secular clergy.

Bingen, and a King of England

In 1651 the institute founded a seminary at Würzburg, and at the invitation of the Elector-Archbishop of Mainz, Johann Philipp von Schönborn - who later admitted him to his intimate circle - Holzhauser became parish priest and dean at Bingen on the Rhine, the town already famous as the home of St. Hildegard five centuries earlier. There he opened Latin schools for the benefit of the town and the surrounding country, and there he spent his final years.

It was at Bingen that the most striking single episode of his life took place, and the 1799 biography recounts it in detail. Charles II, the exiled King of England, preparing to return to his country, had heard of Holzhauser's reputation - he "had predicted astonishing things about England" - and, descending the Rhine, desired to see him. The king summoned the priest and conversed with him for an hour, to hear from his own mouth what he foretold of his kingdom and his reign. Holzhauser had predicted that the kingdom would be reduced to the greatest miseries, that the king himself would not be spared, but that after the return of peace the English, converted to the Roman Catholic faith, would do more for the Church than they had done after their first conversion. The biography adds that already in 1635 - as a young student, decades before the event - Holzhauser had written: Et intellexi juge sacrificium centum et viginti annis ablatum esse: "And I understood that the perpetual sacrifice would be taken away for a hundred and twenty years." The old biographer, writing in 1799, saw this fulfilled in the span between the penal legislation of 1658 and the first Catholic Relief Act of 1778. Nothing, the life adds, lay closer to Holzhauser's heart than the conversion of England; he longed to go there himself, despising every danger to his life, and was prevented only by the duties of his parish and his schools.

Readers may weigh such reports as they judge best. This site records them because they are part of the historical testimony about the man, faithfully transmitted; the Church herself, in leaving his cause open, has passed no definitive judgment on his private revelations, and neither do we.

The Interpretation of the Apocalypse

Holzhauser wrote his Interpretation of the Apocalypse in Latin in the Tyrol, and completed the work as we have it in 1657, one year before his death - in a real sense, his testament. The circumstances of its composition are described consistently by the early sources: he wrote it "amid the greatest trials, plunged in meditation, fasting and prayer," passing entire days in fasting, separated from all human company. He himself confessed that in writing it he "was like a child whose hand is guided in order to make him write."

The work interprets the Apocalypse of St. John as the prophetic history of the Catholic Church from Christ to the consummation of the ages, divided into seven ages or epochs, each corresponding to one of the seven churches of Asia, to one of the days of creation, to one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to one of the great periods of the Old Testament. In Holzhauser's schema the age of Ephesus runs from Christ to Nero; Smyrna, the age of the martyrs, from Nero to Constantine; Pergamum from Constantine to Charlemagne; Thyatira from Charlemagne to Charles V; Sardes - the fifth age, the age of purgation, in which Holzhauser located his own time - from Charles V until the Great Monarch; Philadelphia, the age of consolation under a holy pope and a great Christian ruler; and Laodicea, the final age of desolation under Antichrist. The full schema, and Holzhauser's verse-by-verse working of it, is the substance of this website, presented chapter by chapter.

The most famous fact about the commentary is that it is unfinished. Holzhauser broke off at the fourth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Apocalypse. When his priests asked him why, he answered with complete simplicity that he no longer felt himself animated by the same spirit and could not continue - and he added that someone who came after him would take up his work and crown it. The 1857 French editor remarks that God, for particular reasons, apparently willed to reserve the rest of His secrets for another epoch.

Death and Burial

While occupied with his parish, his schools, and the fatherly care of his institutes, Holzhauser was seized by a mortal fever. Surrounded by his own, who wept and prayed, he raised his eyes to heaven and died on 20 May 1658, in the forty-fifth year of his life, the nineteenth of his priesthood, eighteen years after the establishment of his institute. He was buried in the parish church of Bingen before the altar of the Holy Cross, under an epitaph that reads: Venerabilis vir Dei servus Bartholomaeus Holzhauser, SS. Theologiae Licentiatus, Ecclesiae Bingensis pastor et decanus, Vitae Clericorum saecularium in communi viventium in superiore Germania restitutor, obiit anno 1658, die Maii 20 - "The venerable man, servant of God, Bartholomew Holzhauser, Licentiate of Sacred Theology, pastor and dean of the church of Bingen, restorer in upper Germany of the common life of the secular clergy, died in the year 1658, on the 20th day of May."

On the second centenary of his death, in 1858, a celebration was held at Bingen in the presence of the Bishop of Mainz, and his grave was identified anew; a monument was erected over it in the parish church in 1880. His bust stands among the honoured figures of Bavaria in the Ruhmeshalle at Munich. The Church has declared him Venerable - the sources place the formal advancement of his cause in the later nineteenth century, under Leo XIII - and his cause for beatification remains open to this day.

His Reputation and the Fortunes of His Book

The judgment of those who knew his work has been remarkably constant. The Petits Bollandistes, the great nineteenth-century French collection of the lives of the saints, wrote in its seventh edition (1878) that Holzhauser left "an Interpretation of the Apocalypse of Saint John, which goes only as far as the fifth verse of the fifteenth chapter - an astonishing work, it is said, which offers so admirable a concordance of times and events that the other commentaries on this sacred book are, by comparison, mere child's play." An old manuscript life of Holzhauser, cited in the 1857 preface, said the same thing more bluntly: compared with this genius, all the other commentators on the Apocalypse, however learned, seemed like children. In the nineteenth century the Munich professor Daniel Bonifacius von Haneberg - later a bishop - judged Holzhauser's the best interpretation of the Apocalypse that had ever appeared.

The book itself had a quiet history. Written in 1657, it circulated and was printed in Latin; old copies are found in libraries across Germany and Europe. The learned Mechitarist fathers published a new Latin edition at Vienna in 1850. In the 1850s a Swiss priest, Canon de Wuilleret - who had himself suffered in the persecution of Catholic Switzerland in the Sonderbund crisis of 1847 - translated the work into French and published it at Paris (Vivès, second edition, 1857), adding a continuation of his own for the chapters Holzhauser left uninterpreted. Wuilleret's continuation, whatever its devotional merits, is not Holzhauser, and this website does not present it as such. When the 1857 edition appeared, contemporaries largely failed to understand a text that spoke of devastation for the Church at the very moment Catholic missions were expanding across the globe; the book was forgotten, surviving copies became rare, and it was left to later generations to rediscover it.

A Note on This Biography and Its Sources

The narrative above rests principally on the biographical notice printed at the head of the 1857 French edition of the Interpretation of the Apocalypse - an abridgement of an anonymous life of Holzhauser published at Bamberg in 1799 - supplemented and cross-checked against the standard reference accounts of his life, notably the article in the Catholic Encyclopedia (1910). Where the French edition garbles German place names (Longnau for Laugna, Verding for Wertingen, Léogénie for the Leukental, Wurabourg for Würzburg), the correct forms have been restored. Reports of visions, prophecies, and answered prayers are given as the early sources give them, with attribution; they are part of the historical record of how Holzhauser was seen by those nearest to him in time, and the reader is free - as the Church is free - to weigh them. Everything on this site is offered in the spirit of the 1857 translator's own closing words, which we make our own: in filial submission to the judgment of the holy Roman Church in everything she may judge concerning this work.

CHAPTER 1

The Vision of the Son of Man and the Seven Churches

Revelation 1

Translated into English from the French edition of Canon de Wuilleret (Paris: Vivès, second edition, 1857), itself translated from Holzhauser's Latin original of 1657. The paragraph numbers (I-XIII), the section divisions, and the headings are Holzhauser's own as printed in that edition. Scripture is rendered in the wording of the Douay-Rheims version, since Holzhauser quotes the Latin Vulgate throughout; Psalm references follow the Vulgate numbering.

§ 1. On the Inscription, the Authority, the Purpose, and the Matter of the Book of the Apocalypse. Chapter 1, Verses 1-8

VERSE 1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and signified, sending by his angel to his servant John.

I. Most writers take care to place at the head of their books titles or inscriptions, in order to move all those into whose hands their writings fall to read them and to make use of them. So, and with far greater reason, has the Divine Wisdom done in the present book of the Apocalypse, as may be seen in the first verse, which contains: 1. the inscription and title of the book; 2. its authority; 3. the commission granted by the Superior; 4. the purpose of the work; 5. the subject of the book; 6. the will of the King who permits it; 7. the shortness of the time; 8. the mode of revelation; 9. the name of the writer; 10. the person of the assistant.

II. The first and second points are found in these words: The Revelation of Jesus Christ. There, indeed, the reader sees as a title what this book is - namely, the revelation of the secrets and heavenly mysteries, made not by a man or by an earthly king, who can lie or be deceived, but by Jesus Christ, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. These words display the whole dignity and the whole authority of this book.

III. God, one in three Persons, gave to Jesus Christ - inferior to the Father according to His humanity - the commission to write this book, so that thereby the pious and devout faithful who have been, who are, and who shall be in the Catholic Church, which must be regarded as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, might be sufficiently forewarned of the tribulations which God has willed that they should endure, in order to prove them and to increase their glory. He has permitted all this from eternity, so that we might be fortified, as by the shield of a necessary foreknowledge, against all adversities both present and future. He has willed that we should be consoled concerning the shortness of our tribulations in comparison with eternity, resisting them with the greatest strength and entrusting ourselves fully to the good pleasure of the divine will and permission, which cannot fail to be carried out - as appears from the words of the text: which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

IV. The manner in which Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed all these things to Saint John was the most perfect, such as had never before been granted to any prophet; for it consists in these

three things: 1. imaginative vision; 2. full understanding of the mysteries; and 3. the assistance of an angel. Now Saint John had these three helps in writing this book of the Apocalypse, as appears from the end of the text: and signified, sending by his angel to his servant John - that is to say, He sent His angel (Saint Michael), who, holding the place of Christ after the manner of a royal ambassador, appeared to Saint John the Evangelist, in order to unveil to him the mysteries of God concerning His Church, militant on earth and triumphant in heaven, and to instruct him outwardly (exterius), communicating to him a full understanding of all these things.

V. VERSE 2. Who hath given testimony to the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatsoever he hath seen. These words declare the authority of the writer, who was none other than Saint John the Evangelist, that disciple cherished by his Master above all the others, who bore testimony to the word of God concerning His eternal generation (John 1): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; and concerning His Incarnation in time: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory," etc. Wherefore it is added: who hath given testimony... to Jesus Christ... and to whatsoever he hath seen - in His life and conversation, in His miracles, in His death and in His resurrection, as may be seen in the Gospel. He bore this same testimony in the persecution of Domitian, confessing and preaching with the greatest strength, in the midst of torments, that Jesus Christ crucified is truly Son of God and Son of Man.

VI. VERSE 3. Blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy, and keepeth those things which are written in it; for the time is at hand. The Apostle here makes his hearers attentive to the usefulness of this book, whose purpose is to make us obtain heavenly beatitude. Blessed is he that readeth. This applies to the doctors who teach others, by the words of this prophecy, justice and the fear of the Lord, and who strengthen them in adversities by the love of Jesus Christ and by the reward of eternal life. For blessed are they that instruct others unto justice: they shall shine as stars for all eternity. And blessed is he that heareth. Here he addresses the pious and simple disciples who believe the words of this prophecy, keeping in their heart the justice and the patience of Jesus Christ which are described therein. And keepeth those things which are written in it. That is to say: blessed is he who shall endure labours and tribulations, bearing them with patience unto the consummation. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him. For the time is at hand - that is, passing swiftly. It is as though he would say: the labour of patience is short, and the reward of beatitude is eternal. Hence these words of the Apostle to the Romans (8:18): "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

VII. VERSE 4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from him that is, and that was, and that is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; VERSE 5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, VERSE 6. And hath made us a kingdom, and priests to God and his Father: to him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen. VERSE 7. Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him. Even so. Amen. VERSE 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. This Asia is a great province of Asia Major, in which there were seven cities, and in these cities seven churches with seven bishops, of which the metropolis was Ephesus. Saint John wrote and sent this book of the Apocalypse to these seven churches, which had been entrusted to him in the separation of the Apostles. This number seven, as in many other things, perfectly represents the universality of all the churches. And the author,

wishing to win their goodwill and move them to hear and to read him, greets them with humility, taking no other title than his name: John to the seven churches, etc. This name, nevertheless, was most pleasing, and filled with spiritual joy those who heard it.

VIII. After this greeting comes the wish of good things, as so many means of winning goodwill: Grace be unto you and peace - that is to say: I wish you the grace of persevering in good, consolation in adversities, courage in trials, and likewise peace of heart and unity of minds and of faith, both interior and exterior, and finally eternal rest. Now all these things are gifts of God, according to Saint James (1:17): "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." Wherefore Saint John at once points to the source of true peace and grace, saying: Grace be unto you and peace from him that is, and that was, and that is to come. These words express no one other than God, together with His perfection and His authority; and this distinction of past, present, and future time is there only for our sake, we who are incapable of understanding the matter otherwise. The meaning of these words is therefore: Grace to you and peace from God, who is now, and who was from all eternity; who is to come at the judgment with His saints, and who is to live in eternity by Himself, in Himself, of Himself, and for Himself.

IX. And from the seven spirits which are before his throne. 1° By these seven spirits are designated the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost under the form of tongues of fire, and was sent throughout the whole world. It is by Him that every grace and every true peace was communicated to the Church. Although the Holy Spirit is true God, seated upon the throne with the Father and the Son in the same glory and majesty, He is nevertheless said here to be before the throne, because of the distribution of the gifts and spiritual graces made under the form of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts, according to the eternal will of the Father, for our salvation; just as it is said of the Person of the Word: "He came down from heaven for us men, and for our salvation." 2° By the seven spirits is also understood the universality of the holy angels who are stationed before the throne, and are always ready, as the ministers of God, to labour for our salvation, assisting the bishops in the government of the Church, according to the needs of the times.

X. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness of the glory, the majesty, and the truth of the Father. The faithful witness in the divine preaching, being the Word of God. The faithful witness in His miracles and in the shedding of His precious blood, having made Himself obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore He is called the first begotten of the dead - that is, the first among those raised from the dead, destined to become the cause or the instrument, and the faithful witness, of our future resurrection, after we shall have suffered, groaned, and wept in this valley of tears. And the prince of the kings of the earth - that is, the prince of the earthly powers, having the power to cast them down for the benefit of His elect, or to preserve them for the chastisement of sinners, permitting them to rage and to triumph; as Saint Matthew says (28:18), for the consolation of the Church: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Who hath loved us first, when we were His enemies; and who loved us to the point of washing us from our sins, both original and actual, by His innocent blood; He who was betrayed and put to death by our sins and for our sins. In his own blood, because the sacraments of Baptism and of Penance, which blot out original sin and actual sins, draw their efficacy from His blessed Passion.

And hath made us a kingdom and priests. We were cast out and driven from paradise, from the kingdom of God; and we found ourselves held in slavery, in the bonds of our sins and in the servitude of the devil. But our King Jesus Christ has gathered us together and constituted us a kingdom, or monarchical principality, such as is the Catholic Church - a kingdom holy, admirable, and strong, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, whatever the efforts

of its enemies. And hath made us a kingdom, because He has placed us under the holy law of the heavenly reign, so that God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, might reign over us. And we are His people by obedience, as He is our King by dominion. And hath made us a kingdom - that is, He has willed to receive us as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, so that we should no longer be strangers or guests, but fellow-citizens of the saints, servants of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and upon Jesus Christ Himself, who is the cornerstone. And priests, who no longer offer the blood of animals, but who offer with Him, upon the altar of the sacred cross, the body and the precious blood of Jesus Christ - a sacrifice infinitely holy and acceptable, which the angels themselves desire to contemplate, and which appeases the anger of God which our sins have drawn upon us. And priests, who are no longer fed, as in the old law, with the flesh of animals or the manna of the desert, but with the body and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb without spot, who gave Himself up to be the food and the spiritual drink of our souls. And priests, offering hosts as a sacrifice of praise pleasing to God - that is, to the most holy Trinity, and to God the Father, for whose glory the Son has disposed all things. To him be glory in Himself, and empire over all things for ever and ever - that is, in eternity. Amen. So be it, or, let it be done.

XI. And because our heart is anxious, and the time in which the wicked triumph over us seems to us too long, until we are constituted citizens of the kingdom of God, the author raises up our downcast souls, with admirable efficacy, by the words which follow: Behold, he cometh with the clouds; the Latin text says Ecce venit cum nubibus, as though to say: behold - the time is very short in comparison with eternal pain or eternal glory. Ecce, behold: lift up the eyes of your soul toward the times past - they have flowed away, as though they had never been; toward the times present - how swiftly they flow away! - and toward the times to come - how they approach, and how all is accomplished, though we think not of it! So too the Scripture says: "if he make any delay, wait for him: for he shall surely come, and he shall not be slack." Behold, He cometh with the clouds; the Latin text uses the present tense, to make our weak minds understand that, however long may seem to us this time which separates us from the day of judgment, it is nevertheless, in comparison with eternity, as a present time, in which Jesus Christ shall come and appear. "So also shall the coming of the Son of man be," etc. (Matt. 24:30). The Latin word ecce, behold, which is often employed in this book, means, in the mind of the Holy Spirit, that we must lift up our souls and stir our imagination in order to grasp something serious, admirable, lovable, or dreadful.

XII. And every eye shall see him, because He shall appear visible to all. And every eye shall see him: the free man and the slave, the rich and the poor, kings and princes, nobles and commoners, the learned and the ignorant, the just and the wicked, etc. But all shall see Him in a different manner; for His appearing will be infinitely pleasing to the just, like that of a bridegroom to his bride, of a father or mother to their son, of a brother to his brother, of a friend to his friend, and above all of a saviour to one saved. Indeed, He will present Himself to the just in the character of bridegroom, saviour, father, master, brother, and friend. Luke 21:28: "But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads" (that is, let your hearts expand), "because your redemption is at hand." The appearing of Jesus Christ, on the contrary, will be terrible to the wicked and to those who pierced him: such as the Jews who crucified Him, the soldiers who crowned Him with thorns and scourged His sacred body, Pilate who judged Him, Herod who mocked Him, the chief priests who blasphemed Him, treating Him as a thief - and we also, who have pierced Him by our sins. And those who pierced him in His holy members: in wards, in widows, in orphans, in the wretched, in the poor, of whom He is the protector, the advocate, and the father. And those who pierced him by calumniating, condemning, envying, despising, and treating unworthily holy and sacred persons and things: such as the tyrants who shed the innocent blood of the martyrs for the sake of the faith and of justice; the princes, kings, magistrates, judges, and guardians who

shall have overburdened and oppressed wards, widows, and the like. Such also are the scorners, the detractors, those who judge rashly, the shameless, the heretics, the poisoners, etc. It is to all the wicked who shall not have done penance that He will appear as a terrible judge, so much so that they will say to the mountains: "Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us," that we may not see the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne.

XIII. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him - the Latin text says plangent se, they shall lament over themselves, on seeing the riches of His glory, of which they shall have so shamefully deprived themselves. They shall lament over themselves, they shall groan, seeing those who shall have founded themselves upon Jesus Christ. And they shall say, repenting and groaning in the anguish of their spirit: "These are they whom we had some time in derision" (Wisdom 5:3). Even so. Amen. These two words express an affirmation. The first is of Greek origin and signifies the nations; the second, drawn from the Hebrew, designates the Jews. They are joined together in order to persuade us of the irrefragable truth of the resurrection and of the last judgment; because on that day both the nations and the Jews shall see Jesus Christ as a judge who will render to each according to his works, whether good or evil. And this evangelical truth is the one truth most capable of restraining our perverted will from the forbidden pleasures of the present life, and of stirring up in us the fear of God and the love of the goods to come. Wherefore this truth is efficaciously confirmed by these two words: Etiam. Amen. Even so. Amen. Hence these words of Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:18): "For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled."

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come: meaning by this - My sentence can be neither changed nor annulled; because I am before any thing was; and all things have begun, begin, and shall begin by Me, and not without Me, to whom all things tend as their end. He is called Alpha and Omega because alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and omega the last, signifying by these words that God is the beginning and the end of all creatures, and that all is subordinate to Him - after the manner of the sea, from which all waters go forth, and into which all waters return. Who is, and who was, and who is to come: these last expressions are explained as above.

§ 2. On the Author of the Apocalypse: How Saint John Saw and Wrote This Book. Chapter 1, Verses 9-12

XIV. VERSE 9. I John, your brother and your partner in tribulation, and in the kingdom, and patience in Christ Jesus, was in the island which is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus. VERSE 10. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, VERSE 11. Saying: What thou seest, write in a book: and send to the seven churches which are in Asia, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamus, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

After the greeting, Saint John passes immediately to the narration. He mentions, as if in passing, his own person, the place where he received the revelation, the reason why this revelation was made to him in that place, the time, and the manner of it. He first makes his hearers attentive, as is always customary in exordiums.

I John, your brother - not by the ties of blood, but by the spiritual regeneration wrought through the sacrament of Baptism. Your brother in the unity and communion of the saints, in charity, in Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ, who is the common Father of us all according to regeneration unto eternal life.

And your partner in tribulation, and in the kingdom, and patience in Christ Jesus. For it is in Jesus Christ, who is our Head, that all merit is founded; and it is through the unity of faith and charity, which exists in the communion of saints, that the merits of the just flow into each of the members, as by a participation of kinship or of blood.

Your partner in tribulation - that is to say, I have been persecuted for the faith of Jesus Christ like the other Apostles, when I was plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil. I endured martyrdom as far as it was possible for me, for the sake of the heavenly kingdom, into which one cannot enter except through many tribulations, just as Jesus Christ had to suffer in order to enter into His glory. From this it follows that he who does not imitate Jesus in tribulations will not follow Him into His kingdom.

And in the patience of Jesus Christ - that is, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who gives patience and consoles us in tribulation. Tribulation differs from patience in this: tribulation, derived from the Latin words tribula and tribulatio, indicates a long, vehement, and varied persecution by tyrants, by which the soul of the one who suffers is placed in a state of anguish over which the Church groans; whereas the word patience expresses the bearing of miseries common to all men. The word tribulation also signifies all kinds of torments by which the saints are tried like grapes beneath the winepress. Patience is the virtue which makes us endure them with a calm spirit.

I was in the island which is called Patmos. For Saint John, having been placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, was not burned there, but rather anointed like a strong athlete; and he came out of it more vigorous. He was sent into exile to Patmos by Domitian, who succeeded his brother Titus, in the year of Our Lord 82. It was in his exile that God revealed to Saint John these mysteries of the Apocalypse.

I was in the island, etc. These words designate the place where he received this revelation - namely, an island, under whose figure the Church of Jesus Christ is very well represented. For in the Church, heavenly things are opened to the faithful as an island is generally accessible from every side; and just as an island is continually exposed to the assaults of the sea, so the Church is continually afflicted by the persecutions of the devil, the flesh, and the world.

XV. For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. By these words Saint John indicates, in passing, the cause of his exile: he was sent into exile because he refused to deny Jesus Christ or to cease preaching Him.

Then he adds the mode of his vision: I was in the spirit - that is, in ecstasy - on the Lord's day, which is the day appointed for divine contemplation.

And I heard in the imagination behind me. To understand these words, one must know that among the prophets the words before me designate a past time; in me, a present time; and after me or behind me, a future time. Now, since the principal mysteries revealed to Saint John when he wrote this book were to be fulfilled in a future time, this is why he says: And I heard behind me an imaginary voice, strong and resounding like a trumpet.

These last words show the power and authority of the angel who speaks in the name of Jesus Christ, saying: What thou seest - that is, what thou shalt see in the present revelation; what thou seest in thy imagination and by the intellect, with full understanding - write in a book, for the instruction of the faithful, and send to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamus, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

By these seven churches are designated the seven ages of the Catholic Church - that is, seven different epochs during the course of which the Lord will accomplish all things, and will break the head of many upon the earth, and the age shall be consummated. Therefore these

seven churches of Asia Minor were the type of the seven future ages of the Church until the end of the world. Saint John first wrote to these seven churches, and described the things of which they were the type, as will be seen more clearly in the explanation of each event in particular.

XVI. VERSE 12. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

And I turned - that is, I turned my thought, or applied my mind, in order to understand the mysteries of things to come. These words teach us that, in the revelation of heavenly things, one must turn the mind away from earthly objects and turn it toward God.

To see the voice that spoke with me. The Latin text says ut viderem vocem - "to see the voice" - that is, to see the one who was speaking, taking the effect for the cause. Thus it is written in Exodus 20:18: Cunctus autem populus videbat voces, etc. - "and all the people saw the voices," that is, heard them.

XVII. A Warning on the Manner in Which Saint John Wrote the Apocalypse

There are three ways of seeing, hearing, or perceiving something by the senses.

The first is to see with the eyes, or to hear with the ears, through the operation of the senses. It is in this way that we see the stars in heaven, and that the companions of Saul - that is, of Paul - heard the voice of Jesus Christ.

The second is when, asleep or awake, we see in spirit, or understand by imaginative visions, things which figure another thing. In this case our exterior senses are elevated by the Lord in so admirable and ineffable a manner that the person placed in ecstasy grasps the objects presented to him in a way more certain and more perfect than any man could see, hear, feel, or grasp any object whatever, even if he were endowed with the best senses.

The third way is intellectual, as when we see a thing by thought alone, without the aid of images by which things present themselves to us as figures.

Now all this takes place in the prophets, by the will of God, in four ways: 1. With the obscurity of faith, when the prophet does not evidently recognise that God is speaking; but, being elevated above nature by a heavenly light, he perceives that it is God who speaks. 2. With evidence in the one who attests - this is when the soul of the prophet is elevated and illuminated by such assistance that he evidently recognises that it is God, or an angel, who speaks to him. 3. If he does not write the things which he sees in this way. 4. Finally, if the natural style and eloquence of the prophet are elevated in what he writes, so that his pen runs, as it were, with the greatest rapidity, and the man writes without fatigue, and knows either wholly or partly what he writes, according as God wills for His good pleasure or for our utility.

Now this Apocalypse was revealed to Saint John the Evangelist, the greatest of all the prophets, in the most perfect manner. For he saw and understood all these mysteries by imaginative visions and by the assistance of the angel who aided him and evidently enlightened his soul. Therefore he says: I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, meaning by these words that his holy soul, rapt in ecstasy, saw, heard, and understood, by the aid of the same angel, all that he wrote in this book.

§ 3. Description of the Church Militant Revealed to Saint John by Its Resemblance to Jesus Christ. Chapter 1, Verses 13-20

XVIII. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks - that is, seven churches full of the oil of good works, burning with the fire of charity, illuminated by the wisdom of the divine Word, and shining before the eyes of the world like lamps and candlesticks.

Indeed, Jesus Christ instituted His Church so that she might come to the aid of the needy by the oil of the works of mercy; that the infirm might be anointed and strengthened; that those who are cold might be warmed by the fire of charity; that the blind might be enlightened by heavenly wisdom; and that the works of darkness might flee before the works of light and holy conduct.

Golden candlesticks - that is, cast in the knowledge of discretion and in heavenly prudence. For just as gold is more esteemed than other metals by kings, princes, and other men, and just as it has great efficacy in medicine for healing the infirm, so also discretion and prudence are not only highly esteemed by men but are also necessary to spiritual medicine in fraternal correction.

Golden candlesticks, by which are represented the splendour, riches, majesty, honour, and exterior glory with which Jesus Christ has willed to adorn His Church, His spouse, and to make her shine before the eyes of the world according to the diversity of times.

Golden candlesticks - that is, polished and wrought. For just as gold is tried by fire, and the candlestick takes its form under the craftsman's instrument, so the Church is perfected and extended in long-suffering, purified by tribulations and by the blows of temptation.

XIX. VERSE 13. And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

This text describes, in the literal sense, the person of Christ, whom the angel represented, as constituted by God the Father to be the High Priest and the Judge of the living and the dead. This person of Christ also figures the person, government, and nature of the Church, His spouse.

And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the Son of man - that is, an angel who was not Christ in person, but an angel sent by Him, who represented the person of Christ.

Like to the Son of man - that is, offering an image, likeness, or idea of Jesus Christ, according to which He formed His Church like unto Himself.

Like to the Son of man, thereby designating the Spirit of Christ, who maintains and spiritually vivifies the body of His Church as the soul of man vivifies his body. This is why Saint John writes these words: In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

For Christ, whose person is represented by the angel, is in the midst of His Church as an invisible Head: governing her, sustaining her, vivifying her, instructing her, consoling her, defending her, and loving her; just as a master is in the midst of his disciples, a father in the midst of his children, a king in the midst of his subjects, and a commander in the midst of his soldiers, according as it is written in Matthew 28:20: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

These angels are also in the midst of the Church as ministers preordained by God to be our guardianship, our salvation, and our help. Finally, this angel who is in the midst of the seven

golden candlesticks is also the type of all the other angels.

XX. Clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

These words depict that being like to the Son of man; and this description reveals to us the nature and government of the Catholic Church, the spouse of Jesus Christ.

Saint John says that he saw Him clothed with a garment down to the feet. Now the long garment, or priestly vestment, which descends to the feet, is the alb. This garment designates the humanity of Jesus Christ under which He showed Himself to men, having made Himself like unto us and having been covered with a garment as a man and as a Pontiff who could have compassion on our infirmities.

He was constituted by God the Father as an eternal Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, having offered Himself to the Father once upon the Cross as a living Victim, and offering Himself each day for us in the sacrifice of the Mass.

Now such also is the Catholic Church: she offers, in fact, a living image of Christ, and gives us an idea or prototype of her divine Spouse. She is adorned with a long garment - that is, with the dignity and priestly habit descending to the feet - to represent the priesthood which will continue until the consummation of the ages. The whiteness of this long garment indicates the purity of conscience, simplicity of soul, humility of spirit, and chastity of body which must always accompany the priesthood.

And girt about the paps with a golden girdle - with the girdle of the justice and truth of Jesus. Isaiah 11:5: "And justice shall be the girdle of his loins: and faith the girdle of his reins."

A golden girdle - that is, the priesthood will have much to suffer from the world because of justice and truth, and will be tried like gold in the furnace.

Now in this way one may also say of the Church of Christ that she is girded beneath the breasts. By the girded loins is understood the mortification of the flesh, such as was prescribed in the Old Testament; and by the breast girded beneath the breasts is understood the mortification of the soul, such as is commanded in the new law. For under the new law Jesus Christ adorns and newly girds His Church, His spouse, as with a girdle of precious gold. Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."

VERSE 14. And his head and his hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow.

It is fitting that the head of the priest, as also of the judge, should have the whiteness of maturity and wisdom. Therefore it is said that He who was like to the Son of man had His head and His hairs white as white wool and as snow.

The head represents the Word of God, eternal Wisdom. And His head is said to be white, as representing age, because He is eternal, and because He is the eternal Wisdom of the Father. This is why the prophet Daniel says of Christ, in chapter 7:9: "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat."

The hairs signify the saints and the just, forming so great a multitude from all nations that no one can number them. Moreover, hairs grow upon the head, adhere to it, and are its ornament. In the same way, the saints and just of God have been produced by divine Wisdom, having Jesus Christ as their Head, upon whom they are founded; moreover, they adhere to Him by faith, hope, and charity, and are, as it were, His exterior ornament. For God is glorified by His saints, who through Him have conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil, in order to attain the eternal kingdom.

Finally, two kinds of whiteness are spoken of here: 1. White as white wool. 2. White as snow.

By hairs white as white wool are understood those who became white through many trials, and were washed like wool in the waters of tribulations, which could not extinguish their charity. Under this category are also included those who stained themselves on this earth with the mud of mortal sin, and afterward washed themselves, like Mary Magdalene and other saints, in the waters of Jordan and of penance, like sheep that are washed before they are shorn.

By hairs white as snow are understood virgins and all those who, having preserved their first innocence, carried it to heaven to their Spouse Jesus Christ. These are described in Apocalypse 14:5: "And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God," like snow.

In all these things we also see the portrait of our holy Mother the Catholic Church. For her invisible Head is Jesus Christ, who formed His body and communicates to it interiorly the fullness of grace and truth. Her visible head is, by a continual succession, the Sovereign Pontiff, himself a priest and representing the priesthood, or all the priests who are subject to him. By this are also understood all the prelates who, assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit, govern and rule the Church on earth through Jesus Christ.

The visible head of the Church also has the whiteness of age, since it has existed by a continual succession from Jesus Christ down to this day, having broken the head of all the chiefs of heresy. It has the whiteness of maturity, because its doctrine has always been sound, reasonable, and holy, and because the Catholic Church has always observed a magnificent order in her ceremonies and in all other sacred things.

And his eyes were as a flame of fire.

This signifies the keenness of the intellect in the knowledge of truth. For just as man naturally has two eyes, the right and the left, so Jesus Christ, who is perfect as God and as man, has most pure and most penetrating eyes, which are the whole knowledge of the divinity and of the humanity. These eyes of Jesus Christ are of infinite sight and understanding, because He intimately searches and sees all things, both supernatural and natural, both good and evil, in the past, the present, and the future.

With the right eye He sees the good with their good works, and with the left eye He sees the wicked with their iniquities. Psalm 33:15-16: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and his ears unto their prayers. But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

Therefore Saint John adds: As a flame of fire. For just as fire is a simple and terrible element which tries gold and purifies it, which illuminates darkness and reveals its works, which devours and penetrates all things, so the eyes of God are terrible when they search the reins and hearts; when they see and illumine all things, the darkness and the works of darkness, however hidden they may be. The eyes of God penetrate even to the secrets of hell.

Our holy Mother the Catholic Church also has two perfectly similar eyes. The first of her eyes is divine: it is the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ asked this eye of the Father and gave it to His spouse. John 14:16-17: "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; but you shall know him, because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you."

The other eye of the Church is Sacred Scripture, the holy Canons, the writings of the holy Fathers, the holy Councils, theology, and the sources of all the other sciences, both natural

and supernatural, to which regard is had in definitions and judgments.

And these eyes of truth and clarity in the Church are magnificent. Canticles 4:1: "How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou! thy eyes are dove's eyes." Such are the eyes of the spouse of Jesus Christ, by which she discerns good from evil, truth from error, darkness from light, and by which she forms judgment, justice, and truth. And it is these eyes which, like a burning flame, have slain all heretics, have conquered the devil, the father of lies, the dragon, and the beast, and which penetrate even to the secrets of hell.

VERSE 15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace.

These words signify the fervour of zeal in procuring the honour of God and the salvation of souls - an infinite zeal in Jesus Christ, who descended from heaven for us and for our salvation, enduring for this purpose hunger and thirst during thirty-three years, etc. And He trod the winepress of His Passion and of tribulations. Isaiah 63:3: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me."

Consequently, by the feet is also understood the strength of Christ in labours and tribulations, and His invincible patience, by which He trod underfoot, as He passed along, and conquered all the difficulties and adversities that presented themselves to Him on the road of life and especially of His Passion.

This is why His feet are called like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. For just as fine brass, which is a very hard metal, resists all the heat of the fire, and the more it is exposed to it, the more beautiful its colour becomes, so the strength, patience, and fervour of Jesus Christ shine forth in the heat of tribulations and of His Passion.

And it is thus also that the feet of the Church are the fervour of charity which animates the saints to procure the salvation of souls. For the patience and humility of the saints sustain the Church, which follows in the footsteps of Jesus Christ; and it is with these two virtues, which are like their feet, that the saints tread upon the adversity and prosperity of this world. These feet of fine brass are very strong and very hard in adversity and in prosperity. They burn with the fire of charity, and they are exposed to this fire in the tribulations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and they resist it. Therefore Scripture rightly says in Romans 10:15: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things!"

And his voice as the sound of many waters.

These words signify the efficacy of the Word in preaching and correction. For the voice of Christ is preaching, and also His most holy and most efficacious Gospel, of which Saint Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The prophets spoke much of this voice, calling it a rod, and also the spirit or breath of His mouth. This voice is also the grace of God, of Jesus Christ, which enlightens and stirs the soul, and speaks to the heart.

As the voice of many waters - as water which penetrates, purifies, waters, and spiritually fertilises. The efficacy of this voice, which is like the voice of many waters, is spoken of in Psalm 28:3-9: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty hath thundered: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is in power; the voice of the Lord in magnificence. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars: yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus. And shall reduce them to pieces, as a calf of Libanus, and as the beloved son of

unicorns. The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the desert: and the Lord shall shake the desert of Cades. The voice of the Lord prepareth the stags: and he will discover the thick woods: and in his temple all shall speak his glory."

The Church also has a good voice: it is the voice of preachers crying in the desert of this world. This voice is also the word of God expressed in the Old and New Testament. These voices are the definitions and decrees of the Councils of the Church, the holy Canons, and finally the voice of the Sovereign Pontiff and of the other prelates addressing the faithful. Isaiah 49:2 says of this voice: "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand he hath protected me, and hath made me as a chosen arrow: in his quiver he hath hidden me."

VERSE 16. And he had in his right hand seven stars.

These seven stars signify the universality of the bishops, who are called stars because they must enlighten the Church by their life and by their doctrine. Daniel 12:3: "And they that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."

It is said of them that they are in the right hand of Christ, because without Him they can do nothing right. John 15:5: "Without me you can do nothing." It is also said that they are in His right hand because they are placed beneath His power, by which He now exalts, now humbles, now raises up, now casts down upon the earth him who must be trodden underfoot by men. Thus Jesus Christ contains all things in His grace and His power, here designated by His right hand.

The Church also has a similar right hand, which is the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, or the universal and hierarchical jurisdiction beneath which all the other bishops are placed.

And from his mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword.

By the sword, justice is designated, Jesus Christ being the judge of the living and the dead. This sword is two-edged because this Judge will be just, considering neither the king nor the poor; He will judge the just and the impious, and He will render to each according to his works.

It must be noted that this sword comes out of His mouth, since the sentence of a judge is pronounced by the mouth. Thus Saint Matthew 25:34, speaking of Jesus Christ, says: "Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me," etc. And again, in the same chapter: "Then he shall say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels," etc.

The Church also holds a similar sword, since Jesus Christ established her as judge of the controversies which may arise at certain times concerning justice and faith. Matthew 16:18-19: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

Therefore the Church judges matters of justice according to the holy Canons, and decides what belongs to faith, by declaring the legitimate sense of the holy Scriptures and by issuing sentences of excommunication and anathema against the obstinate. It is therefore with reason that this power of the Catholic Church to pronounce anathema and excommunication

is called a sword - a power which she has always used and which she will always possess.

And his face was as the sun shineth in his power.

This face of Jesus Christ triumphant in heaven is His most glorious humanity, from which radiates the light that is in Him and the splendour of eternal glory - a face which even the angels desire to contemplate, and which enlightens every man who comes into this world. Therefore he adds: as the sun shineth in his power.

For just as the sun enlightens the whole world, warms it, makes it fruitful, and penetrates by its power the mountains, the seas, and all things, so Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of eternal light, waters all that is dry with the dew of divine glory; He dries all that is moist by the heat of heavenly desires; He warms all that is cold by the fire of His love; finally, He fills all things with His goodness.

His face is spoken of in Psalm 103:29: "But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled; thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust."

The face of the Church, the spouse of Jesus Christ, is also magnificent by the splendour of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon her on the day of Pentecost. Therefore she shines like the sun in its strength - that is, in a most beautiful order, in the conformity of all things, in the magnificence of her rites and ceremonies, etc. She shines like the sun in its strength - that is, in her holy laws, conformable to God, to nature, and to men. Like the sun in its strength - that is, in the integrity, purity, and truth of her faith. And by this she enlightens every man coming into this world, so that if pagans, heretics, and other unbelievers were willing to look upon the face of the Catholic Church, they could easily be enlightened and converted to the true faith.

XXI. VERSE 17. And when I had seen him, I fell at his feet as dead.

After having sufficiently described, from head to feet, Him who was like to the Son of man, Saint John adds: And when I had seen him, I fell at his feet as dead.

By these words one sees the almost mortal terror and fear with which Saint John was seized. He adds that he fell at His feet so that by this the Spirit of Christ might also show us that the feet of His Church - which are, as we have said above, strength and patience - would be astonishing and terrible, since the Church was to tread, until the end of the world, the winepress of tribulations, and to walk in the blood of martyrs.

These two words, astonishing and terrible, truly express the sentiments one experiences at the sight of the marvellous events which mark the different ages of the Church. For what a terrible thing are the evils which God permits against His Church in order to prove her! But also what an astonishing and admirable thing is the intervention of His goodness, His patience, and His love in favour of His elect amid all these horrible trials! After fear and terror ordinarily comes consolation.

XXII. And he laid his right hand upon me.

His right hand designates the grace and power of Christ, which He placed upon Saint John, who here represents the person of the Church. That is to say, He placed His right hand upon His Church and her members, saying: Fear not.

It is as though He were saying: Do not fear, although you must undergo horrible persecutions and cross the torrent of the blood of the martyrs - a torrent which it pleased My Father from all eternity that I should drink for the glory of His elect. For I have placed upon you My right hand - that is, My grace. My right hand - that is, My power, which will not permit anything to be imposed upon you beyond what you can do and bear. My right hand, because I will be with

you in all your tribulations until the consummation of the ages.

XXIII. VERSE 18. I am the first and the last, and alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever.

By these words He excites the Church, and us who are her members, by His example - the most admirable possible - to endure all evils; and He strengthens us, saying: I am the first - that is, I am God and the principle of all creatures; and nevertheless I am the first who endured all these things, and many others, to serve as an example for you.

And the last - that is, the end for which all things were created, and to which all things are ordered and referred; and nevertheless, I am the last of the living. Isaiah 53:2-5: "We have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity. His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon him: and by his bruises we are healed."

I am alive, and was dead - meaning by these words: Behold, I truly died upon the Cross, and I was laid in a sepulchre; men despaired of My life and of My resurrection; and nevertheless I truly rose again, and I live, I who was dead.

And behold I am living for ever and ever. By these words, Our Lord Jesus Christ shows us immortality, and wills to convince and persuade our souls to endure even death with love, saying to us: Behold Me, I who suffered for a little time, I am living for ever and ever - that is, I am eternally immortal and impassible, according to Romans 6:10: "For in that he died to sin, he died once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

It is by considering immortality that the holy martyrs and delicate virgins conquered with joy and endured with patience all the torments of the world and all the temptations of the age.

XXIV. And I have the keys of death and of hell.

The keys signify power. I have the keys of death: witness the prophet Osee 13:14: "O death, I will be thy death." And elsewhere the Lord also says: Death shall give up its dead at My command, at the sound of the trumpet. It shall give them up living, etc. Arise, ye dead, etc. Come to judgment. I will make the death of the faithful precious before the Lord, whatever its kind may be.

I have the keys of hell - that is, power over the devil, who, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking to devour us, and whom we must resist, strong in faith.

Of hell - that is, of the prince of this world, whether of his ministers or of his members, who seek by all possible means to reduce you under their power and to draw you away from Me by innumerable torments. But this prince has already been cast out; and therefore you must not fear his ministers. This is what Jesus Christ also tells us in Luke 12:4-5: "Be not afraid of them who kill the body… fear ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell."

Of death and of hell, because when those who are the ministers of the devil shall have raged enough, death will tear them apart by My command, and hell will swallow them alive. They will not rage against My will, nor beyond it; for I will not permit you to be tempted above your strength, and I will make your temptations bear fruit. He who has the key of the house introduces into it whom he pleases, and also excludes whom he wills.

VERSE 19. Write therefore the things which thou hast seen, and which are, and which must be done hereafter.

Write therefore the things which thou hast seen - that is, the past evils which I have revealed to thee; and which are - the present or imminent evils, and those which, by the permission of God, have already begun or are about to happen in order to prove the Church.

And which must be done hereafter - the evils which must follow, or which will happen at the end of times, so that by the examples of patience and invincible strength of the first persecuted, those who follow them, and the last faithful, may be sufficiently encouraged.

VERSE 20. The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.

That is to say: behold the mystery which He explains to us, teaching us how, by the property of things and of words, and by allegories, we must understand and interpret the other things.

By the seven angels, therefore, is understood the universality of the bishops who will exist in the seven ages of the Church.

The seven candlesticks make us understand the seven future ages of the Church, during the course of which the age will be consummated, all will be reduced to ruins, and the head of him who has dominated the earth will be broken.

The seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. Saint John describes all these things in what follows.

CHAPTER 2

Letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira

Revelation 2:1–29

The Four First Ages of the Church Militant

§ 1. On the First Age of the Church Militant, Which May Be Called the Age of Sowing (seminativus), from Jesus Christ and the Apostles Until Nero. Chapter 2, Verses 1-7

I. VERSE 1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The seven churches to which Saint John addresses himself are, as has been said, the type under which the seven ages of the Catholic Church, at different future epochs, are described. For it is deliberately that he adds: And I turned... and I saw seven candlesticks - that is, seven future states of the Church. To these ages correspond the seven days of the Lord when He created the world; likewise the seven ages of the world, and the seven spirits or gifts of the Lord sent upon all flesh on the day of Pentecost. For just as the Lord our God enclosed the course of all generations and of natural things within seven days and seven epochs, so also He will consummate regeneration in the seven ages of the Church, in each of which He will pour out, cause to germinate, and bring to flower new kinds of grace, for the principal purpose of showing the riches of His glory, as we shall see in what follows.

For although the Church of Jesus Christ is one, it is nevertheless divided into seven ages because of the great events which, by divine permission, will succeed one another in her at different times until the consummation of the ages. Each age which follows another commonly begins before the preceding one has fully ended; and while the first imperceptibly diminishes, the second begins gradually to develop. It is by this that we are able to distinguish the different ages.

II. The first age of the Church is the age of sowing, from the Latin seminatio. It is the age in which the right hand of God planted His vineyard upon the Son of man, Jesus Christ. John 15:1: "My Father is the husbandman." This age extends from Jesus Christ and the Apostles until Nero, the first persecutor of the Church, or until Linus, her sovereign Pontiff.

It is in this first age that the devil was conquered in the idols, and that men passed from the darkness of paganism to the light and truth of the faith. For the light of Eternal Wisdom came into the world and enlightened the minds of men through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Apostles whom He chose for this purpose.

It was in this age that the grain of mustard seed was sown - that is, that the word of God was preached to the whole universe and sown upon the earth. Acts 13:49: "And the word of the Lord was published throughout the whole country." For the Apostles went forth to sow the good seed in the field of Jesus Christ, and this seed rose above all the other plants. To this first state or age of the Church apply the two parables of the sower in Matthew 13.

It is also to this first age that the first gift of the Lord corresponds - namely, the gift of heavenly wisdom, which is the true faith in Jesus Christ. By this faith we contemplate the goods of future glory as in a mirror and as through an enigma, and by it also we despise all the perishable things of this world. Hence it is said in Isaiah 11:1-2: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding," etc.

III. The first day of creation was the figure of this first age of the Church: when the Spirit of the Lord rested upon the waters, when God created the light and separated it from the darkness. For it was in the first age of the Church that Jesus Christ, the true light illuminating the world, was born and came into the world, where there was nothing but darkness; and He separated the light of faith from the shadow and darkness of the synagogue, as well as from the errors of paganism.

The first epoch of the world, from Adam until Noah, was also a type of this first age. For in that first epoch Abel was killed by Cain, and Seth was substituted in the place of the first; and by this the fratricidal generation of Cain was separated from the generation of the children of God. That first epoch of the world was also the time of the generation and propagation of the human race according to the flesh. Now we find the fulfilment of these figures in the first age of the Church: for Christ was put to death by the synagogue, and the synagogue was thus separated from the Son of God; and in its place the holy Church was substituted according to the promise in Jesus Christ. Moreover, this first age was also the time in which the regeneration and propagation of the human race according to the spirit was accomplished through Jesus Christ, the common Father of all, of whom Adam was the figure.

Finally, the type of this age was the Church of Ephesus. For the word Ephesus means "counsel," "my will," and "great fall"; and these three different interpretations suit the first age of the Church. For the Apostles and the first Christians were most holy, having but one heart and one soul, fulfilling the will of the Father and of His Christ. These great saints immediately began to observe the evangelical counsels of poverty, humility, obedience, continence, and contempt of all worldly things; and already in this first age, by this holy observance, they conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil, and thus attained to the kingdom.

But because the synagogue rejected the stumbling block which it found in the preaching of the name of Jesus, as Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:23: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumblingblock," etc., the dissemination of the Gospel was thus the occasion of a great fall and of the ruin of that synagogue, which was cast away from the face of God into exterior darkness. And thus the birth of the Church was the death of the synagogue.

IV. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write. Priests are called angels in Malachi 2:7: "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts." The angel of Ephesus is its own bishop, Timothy, and his successors. Bishops are called angels because of their episcopal and pastoral office, for which they are sent by God; for the word angel is interpreted as "one sent."

That is why the wicked, and those who are accustomed to harm the Church, are also called angels, just as those who edify her are called angels. For just as the good are sent, so the wicked are permitted by God for the trial and for the greater glory of His elect.

Timothy was a good and holy angel. He greatly edified the Church entrusted to him; he governed it in a most holy manner; and he went so far as to shed his precious blood for it.

Thus this angel and his Church of Ephesus are the type of the first age of the Church which Saint John describes here. And because this first age is rightly proposed as the rule and example of the others, Saint John omits nothing in his description of it that pertains to the good government of the Church, as the sequel will show.

V. These things saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The Eternal Wisdom of the Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, built Himself a dwelling - that is, a Church - and He hewed out seven pillars upon which this Church is founded, built, and placed. The first pillar is the solidity of faith in Jesus Christ; the second, the fear of the Lord; the third, confidence in God; the fourth, the presence of God; the fifth, the ministry of Christ; the sixth, the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and the seventh, finally, the love of the Bridegroom.

The first is found in these words of the text: These things saith Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These words indicate the infinite authority upon which we are most firmly founded, and by which the Church, the spouse of Jesus Christ, must believe above all in her Bridegroom. For this phrase carries great emphasis, and the great, as well as those who enjoy some authority and credit among peoples, commonly use it at the head of their edicts. Thus a king, sending an embassy to a queen, uses it by saying: "These things saith the king."

And it is in the same manner that the Bridegroom acts toward His spouse: He who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand - that is, who has all the bishops and prelates of the Church under His power, by which He breaks them like a vessel of clay according to His will, and casts them to the ground if they behave badly; but He also preserves them by His grace, signified by His right hand, to keep them from failing in the way of truth and justice.

From these words one may deduce the second and third pillars: the holy fear of the Lord and perfect confidence in Jesus Christ. Let him who stands take heed lest he fall; and let him who has fallen not despair, placing his confidence in the right hand of Jesus Christ, who raises the poor from his dunghill.

Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks - that is, in the midst of all the churches, as He promised in Matthew 28:20: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Who walketh in the midst - who sees and considers all the thoughts, words, and works that are and are done in the Church. And just as God walked in the midst of paradise at the hour of the day when a gentle wind rises, so here it is said that Our Lord Jesus Christ walks in the midst of His Church by His assistance, His presence, His omnipotence, His knowledge, and His love: as a consoler in the midst of the afflicted; as a king in the midst of his subjects; as a high priest in the midst of his ministers; as God in the midst of His creatures; as a father in the midst of his children; as a guardian in the midst of his wards; as a rich man in the midst of the poor; as a judge in the midst of the oppressed; as a physician in the midst of his sick; as an admiral in the midst of his ships; and as an advocate in the midst of the guilty.

From these words arise the four other pillars upon which the Church, and all of us who are her members, must be fixed. The fourth pillar is the presence of Almighty God, Jesus Christ; and if we keep our eyes fixed on this pillar, we act rightly in everything and everywhere. Next comes the ministry of the altar and of our state, the fifth pillar, which we must fulfil with the greatest fear, reverence, attention, and religion, offering to the praise and glory of Him who walks in the midst of us a ministry of sweet odour. Moreover, let us rejoice and remain most secure amid the waves of the sea of this age, upon which we travel in the ineffable assistance of the Holy Spirit, who is the sixth pillar, saying: Thou wilt not leave us orphans, O Lord. Finally, let us be rapt in love, the seventh pillar, for our beloved consoler, Jesus Christ, our King and our High Priest, our Judge and our Father, our Guardian and our Protector, our

Friend and our Physician, our Head and Governor, our Advocate and our beloved Bridegroom.

VI. Having laid this foundation of His Church, God prescribes for us the form of fraternal correction. Although this correction is necessary in the Church of God, it must nevertheless be discreet. Now this quality requires: 1. Superiority in the person who corrects. 2. That this superior should be a good physician, knowing both the good qualities and the defects of those whom he wishes to correct, and that he should enjoy authority, respect, and love among them.

All this is contained in these words: These things saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works.

3. Just as a prudent physician does not immediately give his patient a pure dose of wormwood or rhubarb, but mixes it with wine, manna, sugar, or some other pleasant seasoning, so also a prelate who desires to obtain a favourable result in fraternal correction must not immediately address to the sinner a bitter reproach, as wormwood; rather, he must soften his reproaches by first speaking advantageously of the good he discovers in him, and then add, at the end of his rebuke, some encouragement that may lighten his conscience. For example, he may speak of the occasion of the sinner's fall, its cause, and so on, and teach him the distinction between good and evil.

This is why we find in the text the following words: VERSES 2 AND 3. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast patience, and hast endured for my name, and hast not fainted. This is the praise.

VERSE 4. But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. This is the reproach.

VERSE 6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate. This is the consolation in the admonition.

The cause and occasion which made the fervour of mutual charity grow cold at the end of this first age of the Church were the perverse dogmas of Nicolas, Cerinthus, Ebion, Simon Magus, and the other heretics who arose among the Christians. For whenever there is dispute concerning the truth of doctrine, even the minds of pious people conceive a certain zeal against the absurdity and malice of errors. Now zeal stirs up the fire of emulation; emulation gives birth to rancour; and in this way charity is gradually extinguished - that charity of Christians which makes them desire and will good even to enemies.

Therefore Jesus Christ here corrects His Church and shows her the cause and occasion of her fall. He makes her discern good from evil by these words: But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate. It is as though He said: You do well to hate the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I Myself hate; but you do wrong to abandon the charity which you ought to have for their souls, for whose sake I came down from heaven, was made flesh, and suffered death.

Just as a good physician prescribes a suitable diet to his sick patient for the recovery of health, so a prelate prescribes penance and the remedies necessary to remove the stain of sin, so that his inferiors who have had the misfortune to fall may recover their first perfection of life and avoid every relapse in the future. Now this antidote is found in the following words: VERSE 5. Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen, and do penance, and do the first works.

Finally, in order that the patient may observe the prescribed diet, the physician threatens him with death and encourages him with the hope of healing. In the same way, a good prelate, in correcting vices, proposes both punishment and reward. The first is found in these words of the fifth verse: Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance. And the reward is found in verse 7: To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.

VII. In every well-ordered kingdom there are found nine conditions which render it happy, holy, and just: a. The observance of laws. b. Sustained labour for the common good. c. The endurance of evils for the public good. d. The sword of justice. e. A vigilant police against evildoers. f. The discernment of good and evil. g. Courage amid reverses and adversity. h. Longanimity in things well begun. i. Finally, perseverance in honourable things.

Now all these conditions must be found in the kingdom of God on earth. It is especially because of these conditions that Jesus Christ praises the first age of His Church; and these same conditions He proposes to her as a rule of conduct.

The first is found here: I know thy works. This is the manner of speaking used by the great, who, when they wish to praise or blame their servants, are accustomed to say: Your services are known to us, and we are not ignorant of your fidelity, your good counsels, and so forth. It is in the same way that Jesus Christ praises the first age of the Church for its good works: for having rejected the false justice of the Pharisees, the yoke of the Law of Moses, and the impurity of the Gentiles. He praises it also for its observance of the perfect law of the Gospel, for the honour that thereby returns to its Lawgiver, for its fidelity in honouring Him, and for its gratitude in serving Him.

This, then, is the first condition found in every well-ordered kingdom: the observance of laws. Therefore, when laws are not well observed in a country, it is near to ruin; for nothing results from it but contempt for the lawgiver.

The second condition is found in sustained labour in sowing and propagating the word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what the Church did in her first age, acting with ardour like a courageous soldier, a good husbandman, a true shepherd, and a skilful workman. a. Like a soldier, since the Apostles and their successors fought day and night, by tireless labour, against the flesh, the world, and the devil. b. Like a husbandman; for it is written in Psalm 125:6: "Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves." c. Like a shepherd; for they led their sheep, who were the Jews and the Gentiles, to the waters of the life of Baptism, and fed them all the day long - that is, until death - with salutary admonitions, their doctrine, and their holy examples. d. Finally, like a workman; because they laboured as workmen in the vineyard of the Lord, building up the Church. Moreover, they worked with their own hands to procure for themselves and for others the necessities of life, according to Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:12. And all this was only for the common salvation of all. 2 Timothy 2:9-10: "Wherein I labour even unto bands, as an evildoer; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with heavenly glory."

The third condition is indicated in these words: and thy patience in adversities. This patience is necessary for all the soldiers of Jesus Christ, for good husbandmen, and for shepherds of souls, just as it is necessary for soldiers, shepherds, and husbandmen in temporal matters, so that they may be able to endure labours, adversities, temptations, and all the various tribulations which commonly assail all those who desire to live piously in the Lord. This is how the first founders of the Catholic Church behaved admirably, giving us example: leading a wandering life, covered with sheepskins and goatskins, amid insults and scourges; cast into

chains and prisons; lacking all things, afflicted, abandoned, persecuted, and so forth. They endured all these things in imitation of their Head, Jesus Christ, for the common salvation of Christian society. Patience has always been necessary for the Church, so that the faithful of Jesus Christ may possess themselves.

And how thou canst not bear them that are evil, by communicating with them. These words designate the sword of justice, or the zeal and ardour with which the Apostles and their successors always waged war against false Christians: correcting their vices without dissimulation, and excluding them from the Church of God if they found them obstinate in their false doctrines. This may be seen in Saint Paul, 1 Timothy 1:20: "Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered up to Satan." Now this zeal is so necessary in every political and religious government that, without it, the members and the body become corrupted. For as soon as vices are concealed and not punished, sin is committed with impunity, and crimes multiply like a torrent which floods the body and destroys it by gradually corrupting it, until at last one no longer knows where to find a remedy.

The fifth condition: since the sword of anathema and the zeal of justice are blind instruments, it is necessary that they be directed by a sufficient knowledge of evils. Thus, in every well-ordered kingdom, the prince must make use of a vigilant police which watches over all subjects, even those from whom it is thought there is least to fear, in order to track evildoers and examine their deeds and actions. Now this is what is contained in these words: and thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not. That is, thou hast tried and examined those who, because of their life and doctrine, gloried in being the envoys of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles, and in having the Spirit of God to teach the people; yet they were not apostles, but disturbed the faithful, such as Ebion, Cerinthus, Menander, Nicolas, Simon Magus, and other heretics who arose in Asia in those times. Such also were the false apostles who, under Saint Peter and Saint James, said that they had been sent by the Apostles to Jerusalem, and there taught under this false title that the observance of the laws of Moses, joined to that of the Gospel, was necessary for salvation, as may be seen in several passages of Saint Paul's epistles.

The sixth condition: after a prudent and just prince has recognised, by sufficient examination, the malice and falsehood of someone, he must judge and condemn him. This is seen in these words: and hast found them liars - not only in their doctrine, but in their actions; for they outwardly affected the appearance of justice in order more easily to succeed in deceiving the good. This is why the Church rejected these heretics from her bosom, and why it is said here that, finding them liars, she pronounced from the chair of Saint Peter a sentence of anathema, and declared that none of them had received any mission from God, from Jesus Christ, or from the Apostles; that they did not teach true doctrine; and that they did not prove by true facts that legal justice is necessary for salvation.

The seventh condition: it sometimes happens that, in order to resist the sword of justice and truth, the wicked use rebellions, persecutions, and other means of resistance. That is why strength and greatness of soul are necessary for the prince, lest he allow himself to be turned aside from the just punishment of the wicked by abandoning justice and truth. The Church, in her origin, indeed had many adversities and tribulations to suffer in her members from the heretics who arose at that time; and she endured everything with the greatest courage, sustaining and maintaining the things necessary for salvation by sentences of justice and truth. Now it is this strength of the Church which is praised in these words: and thou hast patience.

The eighth condition: since certain adversities are commonly long, either by the permission of God or because of the iniquity of the wicked, the strength of the prince must be supported by his longanimity, so that he may be able at all times to oppose whatever adversity presents

itself because of justice and truth. It is also for this that the primitive Church is praised by these words: and hast endured for my name. These words express the cause and consequence of these sufferings: namely, the glory of the Name of Jesus Christ, which the heretics and the Jews blasphemed by denying His divinity and His humanity, His coming and His works, as may be seen in the epistles of Saint Paul.

The ninth condition: finally, because there are certain evils and adversities which cannot be completely extirpated, the prince must persevere in justice and truth. Now it is especially in the Church of God, where the cockle will grow with the good grain until the day of harvest, and where there will continually be heresies, that the prelate must be persevering in all adversities, always working to conquer evil in good as soon as it has entered. Such, then, is the rule praised here and proposed to the universal Church by these words: and hast not fainted.

VIII. After the praise and the enumeration of good qualities follows the rebuke of defects. VERSE 4. But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity.

Every institution on earth, however holy and well ordered it may be, is accustomed to grow lukewarm and to fall through the daily defects and frailty of its members. This is what happened to the first age of the Church, described under the type of the Church of Ephesus. She abandoned her first charity.

The first charity of Christians consisted in a perfect union and in the community of goods. Acts 4:32: "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul: neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but all things were common unto them." This first charity of Christians also consisted in works of charity and mercy; for they were accustomed to support their poor with fervour and devotion, and to send alms to the faithful who lived in Jerusalem and elsewhere, who had sold their properties in order to support the believers, or who had been despoiled of them for the faith of Jesus Christ. Acts 4:34-35: "For neither was there any one needy among them. For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles. And distribution was made to every one, according as he had need."

Now this first charity grew cold after the death of the Apostles and of Timothy, bishop of Ephesus. For then impious men and false brethren gradually arose, and changed this charity into bitterness, fraudulently taking possession of those goods, dissipating them, deceiving the people, and teaching them perverse things. It is an experience as frequent as it is deplorable to see charity grow cold in the disputes which arise over the dogmas of faith, and in the intrigues which are carried on for appointments to bishoprics, chairs, prelacies, and prebends.

IX. After this rebuke follows a salutary admonition concerning the reform of life, and concerning the manner of carrying out this reform. This manner consists in three things: a. To know one's fault or omission, and to reflect on what occasioned it. b. To perform works of penance. c. Finally, to return to one's first state. This will be seen below.

VERSE 5. Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen. That is to say: recognise thy fault; recall thy first works, and to what degree thou hast withdrawn from perfection and fervour. Search carefully by reflecting on what was the occasion of thy fall, and on what caused thee to abandon charity.

And do penance for the loss of so great a good; and prudently correct thyself, avoiding the occasions which made this charity diminish in thee.

And do the first works - that is, return to thy first state; take up again thy first fervour; begin again thy first works of mercy, thy first love, thy first union; and learn to conquer in good the evils of heretics and false brethren, which were for thee the occasion of abandoning the simplicity of charity.

Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance. By these words He expresses the threat of punishment, which is also required in the form of fraternal correction. Or else, if thou dost not correct thyself in the manner indicated, I come to thee. The Latin text uses the present tense, I come (venio), in order to make the Church understand that divine vengeance is always ready, indeed present, and comes at the moment when we least think of it.

And will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance. Here He adds the kind of pain and punishment, which He indicates in the future, to make us understand the longanimity of God in waiting for our penance, and to show us the punishments which threaten us from afar and for a long time, until at last our prevarication, carried to its height, causes His wrath to break forth.

And I will move thy candlestick out of its place - that is, I will permit tribulations, wars, heresies, and tyrants, who will take away the Church entrusted to thee from the place she occupies, or will deprive her of her dignity and repose. This is indeed what He later did through the ten tyrants who agitated and moved the Church so terribly that she reached a great perfection and a great charity - as witnessed by those millions of martyrs of both sexes who died for the love of Jesus.

I will move thy candlestick out of its place - thy episcopate, thy riches, thy dignities, and thy Church from the place where it now is, if thou refusest to repent of the sins that are known to thee and to do penance for them. This is how He acted toward the Greek Church; toward England, the Holy Land, and Germany; and this is how He has begun to act, and will continue hereafter to act, toward the Latin Church and the whole West, if we do not do penance.

VERSE 6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate. By these words He softens the first rebuke, so that, according to the custom of the good Samaritan, the soothing oil may be mixed with the wine of mortification. But this good and commendable thing thou hast: that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites - that is, fornications and the common use of women.

Then He adds the just manner and measure of hating, which He recommends to His Church according to His own example, saying: that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate. He means and tacitly insinuates that we must never hate persons, however wicked they may be, but only their evil deeds, for the sake of their salvation and of the honour due to God, after the example of Jesus Christ, who hates sin above all things, and yet so loves the person of the sinner that He came down from heaven to die between two thieves and to wipe away our sins.

Thirdly, He teaches His Church what was the occasion that made her abandon her first charity: because, not properly distinguishing persons from their acts, she lost affection and fervour of charity toward them. Therefore He also excuses her in her fault; and, like a most prudent physician, He softens His rebuke by these words: But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate.

X. VERSE 7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. This is a manner of speaking which signifies the difficulty of doing something, or the elevation of the mysteries which must be accomplished in the Church, while at the same time it makes known to us the frailty of our flesh and the corruption of our understanding. It wishes to make us

understand that everything written in this book of the Apocalypse contains wisdom, and that there is great difficulty in understanding it. It is in the same way that Jesus Christ, recommending continence to His Church as an arduous thing, says in Matthew 19:12: "He that can take, let him take it."

To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God. By these words He adds the prize and assigns the reward, in order thereby to invite His Church more effectively to penance. He means: to the conqueror - to the conqueror of the temptations of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil - I will give to eat of the tree of life. I will give him to enjoy the goodness of Jesus Christ, who is the true tree of life, and of whom the tree of life in the earthly paradise was the figure.

To eat of the tree of life - that is, to enjoy the blessed and beatific vision with immortality. For the tree of life metaphorically signifies immortality, as in Genesis 3.

Which is in the paradise of my God - that is, in the heavenly homeland prepared for all those who shall have lawfully fought. 2 Timothy 2:5: "For he also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

§ 2. On the Second Age of the Church Militant, Called the Age of Irrigation (irrigativus), Comprising the Time of the Ten Persecutions, Until Constantine the Great. Chapter 2, Verses 8-11

I. VERSE 8. And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write: These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead, and is alive.

VERSE 9. I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich; and thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

VERSE 10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

VERSE 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the second death.

II. The second age of the Church is called an age of irrigation (irrigativus). For the Church of the Lord is a vineyard which nourishes as many branches as she produces saints. This vineyard, planted in the first age by Jesus Christ and the Apostles, was watered in the second age by a torrent of the blood of martyrs, which was like a fountain springing from the earth and watering the whole surface of the Church.

This effusion of Christian blood lasted ten days - that is, during the ten reigns of the principal tyrants of the earth whom the devil raised up against Christendom, striving by this means to make the faith of Jesus Christ disappear and be extinguished, since he had not been able to prevent it by the jealousy of the Jews.

God permitted these long and terrible persecutions for the greater glory of His elect soldiers, and in order to strengthen more firmly the truth of the Catholic faith, which remained pure despite those horrible persecutions. It was even elevated and ennobled by the increase which it received every day.

Moreover, God permitted these persecutions in order to excite the Church to perfect charity, which, in the age of the martyrs, was in fact perfect, as may be seen from what has been said above.

To this age of the Church belongs the parable of Saint John 12:24: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

To this age also belongs the passage of Psalm 109:7: "He shall drink of the torrent in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head." This means that it pleased the heavenly Father that we should drink, on the road of this present life, from the torrent of the blood of the martyrs; and it was in order to give an example to His soldiers that He exalted upon the Cross His Son Jesus Christ, their Head.

III. To this age applies the second Spirit or gift of the Lord: that is, the spirit of fortitude and invincible patience in difficulties and adversities. Armed with this shield, the saints of God, of both sexes, conquered the world and attained the heavenly kingdom.

This second age is also figured by the second day of creation, when God established the firmament in the midst of the waters. This firmament represents the firmness and strength of the martyrs, whom God placed in the midst of the waters of every tribulation, which could not extinguish their charity.

Moreover, just as on the second day of creation the firmament was placed in heaven, so also in the second age the Church - represented by heaven - was most solidly established upon the testimony of the martyrs, a testimony which is, as it were, her foundation.

To this second age of the Church also corresponds the second epoch of the world, from Noah until Abraham. For just as Noah and his descendants began in that second epoch to offer victims to God, so also in the second age of the Church Christians were immolated without distinction. The shedding of their blood, and their death offered in an odour of sweetness, were most precious and most pleasing to God the Father, who was Himself a victim in His Son Jesus.

Consequently, this age of tribulations and martyrs is described under the state of the Church of Smyrna. For the word Smyrna means "Canticle" and "Myrrh." Now this word, in both of its meanings, suits this age of martyrs.

It suits it as "Canticle," because Christians of both sexes ran, so to speak, to martyrdom, leaping for joy, as is seen in the history of the Church and in Acts 5:41: "And they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."

The tribulations and death of the holy martyrs are also a most pleasing canticle, in which God finds His delights, the angels rejoice, and all the saints praise the Son of God.

The word "Myrrh" also suits this age of the Church. For just as myrrh is bitter and preserves from corruption, so tribulations and persecutions are bitter. They preserve the Church and her members from the corruption of vices, pleasures, and sin; and they make her body robust by patience, poverty, humility, contempt of this world, charity toward God, and love of the goods to come.

Moreover, myrrh spreads a sweet fragrance; it is used in sacrifices offered to God. In the same way, the blood of the martyrs and their death have a most sweet fragrance, and they are a sacrifice whose good odour continually rises in the presence of God.

VERSE 8. And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write. Literally, this means: Write to the bishop of the Church of that place; and, under this type, to all the bishops, pontiffs, and prelates, and even to all the Christians who will live in this age of the martyrs of the Church.

These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead and is alive. These words must be understood in the same sense as above. They are placed at the head in order to indicate the

example which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our King, gave us by the sufferings which He had to endure in order to enter into His glory. In the same way, His elect must suffer and die, if they wish to live with Him in eternity. This is what stirred millions of martyrs of both sexes to follow courageously the example of their Bridegroom and King, Jesus Christ. So great is the efficacy of the example of a leader!

VERSE 9. I know thy tribulation and thy poverty. These two expressions are placed here as two properties or marks of the state of the martyrs. For the word "tribulation" carries great emphasis and comes from the Latin word tribula, expressing adversities of every kind: persecutions, outrages, torments, distresses, which were for the martyrs so many diverse and horrible kinds of death.

Poverty, on the other hand, signifies the spoliation of temporal goods, exile, expulsion from episcopal sees, from the Church, from one's father's house, and so forth. Now this is what the saints of God endured, full of joy for their Bridegroom Jesus Christ, at the hands of the tyrants who raged against them for more than three hundred years, as is seen in ecclesiastical history.

But thou art rich - rich in spiritual treasures, in thy merits, in thy heroic virtues, in the gold of charity, in the iron of fortitude, in the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, or in the eternal glory prepared for thee in heaven because thou hast lost the passing possession of the goods of this world.

Thou art rich, because you are the friends of God and your names are written in heaven. On the contrary, the great ones of the world who despoil and persecute you are poor, since after this passing life they will go into eternal punishments, where they will suffer horribly.

And thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. By "Jews" are understood here:

First, the remnants of the Jews and of the synagogue of the Old Testament, who were rejected by God, and among whom there is no salvation. This is why He adds: who say they are Jews - that is, elect, because they are of the race of Abraham - but who are not truly elect, since they belong to the synagogue of Satan, that is, to the assembly of the reprobate, God having delivered the Jews to the power of Satan, whose members they are, because of their unbelief and their obstinacy in evil. For this people, which denied Jesus Christ, will not belong to Him. Daniel 9.

Second, the name "Jews" passed to Christians; and for this reason, by allegory, it signifies bad Christians who say that they are elect and confess that they know God, while denying Him by their works. Romans 1.

It is of both that the Apostle says in Romans 2:28-29: "For it is not he is a Jew, who is so outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outwardly in the flesh: But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter: whose praise is not of men, but of God."

These words of the text of the Apocalypse - who say they are Jews - therefore apply literally to the true Jews of the race of Abraham, according to the promise; but allegorically they must be understood of Christians, according to the promise in Jesus Christ (secundum repromissionem in Christo).

It is by all these that the Church of God is blasphemed in the elect and in the saints who are her members. For the Jews say that if faith in Jesus Christ were true, and if Jesus Christ were truly the Messias and the true Son of Almighty God, He would not permit His elect and His friends to be afflicted and immolated like flocks.

The Jews regarded the death of Jesus Christ as an ignominy, and His Cross as a scandal, according to Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:23: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."

Bad Christians and heretics of the first centuries also blasphemed the Church of God by their evil actions and by their perverse doctrines; and this made the Church appear still more vile in the eyes of the Jews, the Gentiles, and the tyrants. Thus false Christians exposed the members of the Church to greater ridicule, and those members endured more cruel persecutions.

VERSE 10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. By these words Jesus Christ encourages His Church to bear with intrepidity all evils, however long and however cruel they may be. And since blows which one has foreseen are less dangerous, and since we regard as more tolerable the evils of this world which we know in advance, so we must endure the trials which it has pleased the divine will to permit for the advantage of His Church, however great and enduring the tribulation may be, and whoever may be the persons who inflict it.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days.

The devil shall cast some of you into prison. The devil is here represented as the determining cause, because of his habitual jealousy against the faithful. He will push kings and princes to tyranny, excite the Jews, and bribe false and bad Christians to speak evil of you, in order to have some of you thrown into prison - that is, a great number among you, and even, if it were possible, all the Christians who will live in this second age of the Church.

All these wicked ones will be like the lictors of the devil. This is why the Latin text says: The devil shall send some of you into prison by his satellites, who are the princes of this world, and whom he uses to satisfy his insatiable passion for harming the pious members of Jesus Christ. The satellites of the devil are also the works of the impious upon the earth.

Into prison. This word signifies: First, the duration of the tribulations to come; for one who is placed in prison does not come out of it quickly, just as when one says that money is placed in the public treasury, one means that it remains there a long time.

Second, this word "prison" also designates every kind of evil which the saints and elect of God were to undergo. For the prison is like the workshop of all tribulations. Indeed, he who is placed in prison is separated from men like a criminal, and there he may experience hunger, thirst, cold, heat, chains, nakedness, the spoliation of his goods, torture, torments, whips, rods, reproaches, vigils, indigence, and stench.

It is from prison that one comes forth to undergo the sentence of an unjust condemnation: to be placed upon broken earthen vessels; to be broken on the wheel; to be crucified; to be cut to pieces; to be thrown into the water; to be sent into exile; or to be exposed to beasts, bears, lions, tigers, leopards, and the like.

That is why Jesus Christ points to prison, saying: The devil shall cast some of you into prison. And this will happen by the permission of the heavenly Father, that you may be tried, like gold in the furnace.

This trial is not in the intention of the devil, who does not have in view the good of those who are tried. Rather, it is God who wills in this way to draw good out of evil, and who knows how to extract from the cruelty of tyrants the patience of martyrs, which He rewards with a crown of glory.

He still makes His Church undergo these trials in our own days, when her prelates and her members deliver their hearts to sin, pleasures, and temporal riches.

And you shall have tribulation ten days - that is, during ten consecutive reigns of the principal tyrants, who will succeed one another like days, and during which they will rage against Christians.

By these ten days is understood the time which lasted from Nero, the first persecutor of the Church, until Constantine the Great. This makes a span of three hundred years, during which the Church continually swam in the blood of her martyrs of both sexes, as the ark of Noah floated upon the waters of the deluge, until finally, after these ten persecutions, the Church could rest upon the high mountain of Constantine the Great.

The first persecution took place under Nero; the second under Domitian; the third under Trajan; the fourth under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus; the fifth under Severus; the sixth under Maximinus; the seventh under Decius, which was continued by Gallus and Volusian; the eighth under the two Valerians and Gallienus; the ninth under Aurelian; and the tenth, finally, under Diocletian and Maximian his colleague, which was the most terrible of all. See the details in ecclesiastical history.

IV. Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life. By these words Jesus Christ exhorts His Church by showing her the reward promised to perseverance in tribulations; and this exhortation is a consolation offered by divine clemency against the severity and duration of the evils which God was about to permit against His saints and His friends.

Be thou faithful until death - that is, be constant and persevering in tribulation until death.

Be thou faithful, etc., in faith, hope, and charity; and take care not to fail by being scandalised at so many and such long torments as I permit against thee.

And I will give thee the crown of life - that is, the aureole of martyrdom, according to the measure of the tribulations which thou shalt have endured for Me.

The crown of life - the crown of a conqueror in heaven, which shall never be taken from thee. For no one shall be crowned unless he has lawfully fought.

The crown of life - the kingdom, or the liberty of the children of God, so that thou shalt never again be subject to any earthly king.

VERSE 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. These words are explained as above. By this He always wishes to stir up our understanding to seek, in relation to His Church, an abstract sense full of heavenly mysteries, which must be explained and clarified by the property of words and things.

He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the second death. That is, by hell, or by the eternal death of souls. Damnation is called a second death because it follows the bodily death of this perishable life, which is the first death.

Jesus Christ adds these words as a most powerful lever of perseverance amid the anguish of tribulations. For if one considers the horrible punishments of hell and of the eternal damnation of the impious, one will willingly and easily endure all tribulations, and even temporal death, in order to avoid eternal tribulations and eternal death.

It was by keeping these truths continually before their eyes that the servants of God conquered all the torments by which they reached the heavenly kingdom.

§ 3. On the Third Age of the Church, or of the Doctors; from Pope Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine the Great Until Leo III and Charlemagne. Chapter 2, Verses 12-17

I. The third age of the Church was the age of the Doctors. It began with Constantine the Great and Pope Sylvester, and lasted until Charlemagne and Leo III.

In this age, heresies were extirpated and the Christian religion was solidly established almost throughout the whole world. This age is called illuminative (illuminativus), because in it the principal mysteries of the Catholic faith were purified: the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, His humanity, His filiation, the procession of the Holy Spirit, and so forth.

And because things set opposite one another become more clearly understood, God, in order to enlighten His Church, gave her the most illustrious doctors: Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Leo, Bede, and many other Fathers of the Greek and Latin Church. On the other hand, He permitted the most wicked heretics to rise up against them, such as Arius, Donatus, Macedonius, Pelagius, Eutyches, Nestorius, and others. These heresiarchs were supported, for the greater trial of the elect, by powerful princes, such as the emperors Constantine, Julian the Apostate, Valens, Leo, Zeno, Huneric king of the Vandals, Theodoric king of the Ostrogoths, Anastasius king of the Dacians, Constans, Leo III, Constantine V, Leo IV, Constantine VI, and also by a considerable number of archbishops and bishops, and others.

To this third age belongs the third Spirit of the Lord: the spirit of understanding, which enlightened the Church and enabled her to purify the highest mysteries of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation, and many other truths, concerning which the Church pronounced judgment after condemning, expelling, and causing the darkness of heretics to disappear.

The third day of the creation of the world is also rightly considered in this chapter as the true type of this third age. For just as, on the third day of creation, the waters had to be separated from the earth by the will of God and gathered into one place, so also the tribulations - of which waters are often the figure - which the Church had to suffer from the tyrants of paganism, at last had to give way before the power of Constantine the Great, who relegated their authors to the fire of hell.

And again, just as on the third day of creation the earth produced green plants with their seed, and trees bearing fruit, each according to its kind, and an infinite number of other plants bearing their seed, both for the ornament of the earth and for the use and pleasure of man; so also, in the third age of the Church, the water of Baptism caused green plants to spring up - namely, children and adults who became Christians - and trees, namely the Doctors. It also produced fruit-bearing trees: the assured and free revenues of the Church, with which the said emperor enriched her; for he endowed her with several other goods, such as principalities, assigning to her even earthly powers, and helping to build at his own expense, or permitting and ordering to be built, a multitude of sacred buildings over the whole surface of the earth.

Another type of this third age of the Church is found in the third epoch of the world, which lasted from Abraham until Moses and Aaron. For just as in that epoch the Sodomites were submerged in the Dead Sea, and the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and just as Core, Dathan, Abiron, and the other schismatics of the house of Israel were destroyed; and just as a law was given to the people which declared and explained the natural law more clearly; so also, in the third age of the Church, the Christian people passed from martyrdom into the land of peace.

The lust of the world and the idolatry of the nations were submerged in the blood of Jesus Christ and of His martyrs. Many schismatics and heretics were cast out from the bosom of the Church. The law of the Gospel and the truth of the Christian faith were declared and proclaimed. Civil laws and the constitutions of princes were established, and the holy canons of the councils were promulgated; and the emperor Justinian decreed that all these things should have the force of law.

Finally, the last type of this third age was the Church of Pergamus. For the word Pergamus is interpreted as "dividing the horns" (dividens cornua). These horns grew upon the Church in this third age, under Constantine the Great; and these horns were the temporal and spiritual power which she enjoyed. This double power is metaphorically signified by the horns, in which the strength of rams and other animals resides.

Pergamus also means "dividing the horns," because, soon afterward, this strength and power of the Church was divided and split by Arius and the other heretics. The horns fought against one another: the left horn, that of the heretics, against the right horn, that of the Catholics. The first is the horn of damnation, and the second is the horn of salvation, which God raised up in the house of David, His Son, Jesus Christ, always rejecting the horn of the heretics into hell.

II. VERSE 12. And to the angel of the church of Pergamus write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword. These words must be explained as above.

These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword. The two-edged sword means the sentence of the Lord, by which He will condemn the wicked in their body and in their soul. The other words are explained above, in § 3, chapter 1, verse 16.

This two-edged sword is placed here at the head of the description of this third age: 1. To terrify the wicked by the sword of vengeance, and to console the good by the sword of Christ's protection. 2. Because, in her third age, the Church had to fight with heretics. Therefore many ecumenical and provincial councils were celebrated, and a great number of heretics were struck there by the sword of anathema, rejected by the sentence of excommunication, and cut off from the body of the Church; for the Church, as judge of controversies in matters of faith, bears on earth the same sword which Christ, her Bridegroom, bears in heaven, as we have seen above.

VERSE 13. I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith. Even in those days when Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

I know where thou dwellest: in the midst of the perverse nation of heretics, whether of Arius, Macedonius, and the others, who are members of the devil, satellites of Lucifer, lovers of darkness, guides of the blind, autumn trees without fruit, reeds shaken by the wind of pride, already formerly proscribed because of their malice, and relegated to hell, where Lucifer has power, and where the ancient enemy of the eternal truth and justice of God dwells.

The devil possesses these heretics; he governs them, instructs them, inspires them, and dominates them. Therefore they are his kingdom, and he is their king and their head, in order to fight through them - who are the gates of hell - against the Church beloved of God.

This is why the text adds: where the seat of Satan is. For a throne signifies royal power, or rather the residence of a king, a prince, and so forth - a throne which Satan possesses in the heresiarchs.

And thou holdest fast my name - that is, the confession of My name - and hast not denied my faith, in persecutions and torments, but hast persevered in My faith.

It is with reason that Christ praises, by appropriation, in the prelates of His Church, the confession of His name and perseverance in the faith of His name. For in this age the divinity and humanity of Christ, His coming, and His doctrine concerning the mysteries of paternity, filiation, and the procession of the Holy Spirit were strongly attacked by Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, and the other heresiarchs.

The Catholic faith and its defenders had incredibly much to suffer at that time. Witness Saint Athanasius, admirable and lovable man, who, because of the name of Jesus and His divinity, and also because of the Most Holy Trinity, was forced to hide for years in an old cistern, and for a year and some months in the tomb of his father. This saint also had to undergo great trials, as did many other bishops who endured prison, chains, exile, death, and so forth, as may be seen in ecclesiastical history.

Even in those days when Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. As an example of the confession praised above, and of perseverance in the faith of Christ, Saint John here cites the holy martyr Antipas, who was put to death for the confession of the faith of Jesus Christ near Constantinople, where the storm of the heresy of Arius had arisen, both among the people and among the bishops; for ambition, no less than the fire of jealousy, had penetrated even to episcopal sees.

This is why that city and country are called the dwelling place of Satan, because it was especially in the East that the Arians, Macedonians, and impious defenders of other heresies raged. This is also why it is said: when, or, according to the Latin text, in diebus illis, "in those days" - that is, in that storm caused by the heresy of Arius on account of My name - Antipas was My faithful witness unto death and unto blood, by which he sealed his testimony for the truth, and because I am the Son of God, truly equal to My Father from all eternity.

VERSE 14. But I have against thee a few things.

We now come to the customary rebuke, which we find in the following words: VERSE 15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites.

The preceding verse says: Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat, and to commit fornication.

We have the history of Balaam in the book of Numbers, where we see that Balac, king of the Moabites, according to the counsel of Balaam, sent women near the camp of the Hebrews, so that this people, given to lust, might be seduced and drawn into idolatry by their beauty, with the aim of causing the whole people to offend God.

This history is reported only by comparison and as an example, as is seen from the words which follow: So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites.

Rupert the Abbot, commenting on the Apocalypse, says of them: the Nicolaites carry the vessels of the Lord, and yet are incontinent; they reject legitimate marriage as forbidden by the laws of the Church; they do still worse: they break conjugal faith as often as they please, and having no true marriage bed, they run here and there so that they cannot be accused of having broken the marriage bond.

Now those make themselves guilty of the same fornications and consecrate themselves to Belphegor who, after the example of the Nicolaites, boldly give themselves over to incest and adultery.

In saying, therefore, So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites, He first addresses a reproach to the Church of Pergamus, in which there were certain perverse magistrates who followed the error of the Nicolaites, scandalised the people by their impure

conduct, and seduced them.

Under the type of the Church of Pergamus, Christ also rebukes the third age of the Church, in which several taught and put into practice the doctrine of the Nicolaites concerning the illicit mingling of the two sexes.

For when the tribulations of the Gentiles and pagans had ceased, the Church was at rest; and from that time, through the munificence of Constantine the Great and other benefactors, priests enjoyed considerable revenues through benefices. Now, the Church having thus been enriched and enlarged, she abandoned God her Creator and neglected her salvation. Several of her members gave themselves over to the pleasures of women by illicit commerce, inflamed as they were in their concupiscence.

That is why God afflicted the Church with so many heresies. He shook or tormented her in order to prevent her from being corrupted in delights and pleasure. Thus a prudent husband, who knows the evil inclination of the wife dear to him, strives to hold her to her duty by providing her with moderate occupation in domestic cares and labours.

It is with the same wisdom that God, in His paternal goodness, will act toward His Church until the consummation of the ages, imposing upon her malicious and mocking men, troublesome detractors, agitators, calumniators, heretics, and tyrants, in order to prevent her from becoming entirely corrupted in riches, honours, and the pleasures of the flesh.

VERSE 16. In like manner do penance: if not, I will come to thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

In like manner do penance. This passage is explained as above concerning the Church of Ephesus.

If not - that is, if thou dost neglect to correct thyself by true penance - I will come to thee quickly, with the scourge and the punishment due to thee, both in life and at death and at the last judgment. This is why He uses the future tense: because, as was said above, the scourges of God often threaten us from afar and fall upon us at the moment when we think of them least.

And will fight against them with the sword of my mouth - that is, with the sword of vengeance, the sword of death, the sword of the particular judgment and of the last judgment, and finally the sword of eternal damnation; and also with those thunderous words of Matthew 25: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

VERSE 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white counter, and in the counter, a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.

After the threat of punishment follows the promise of reward and glory.

The first reward is this: I will give him, that is, to the conqueror, the hidden manna. This figuratively signifies heavenly beatitude, which is the perfect state and the union of all goods. For just as in the manna was contained the life of the people of Israel, together with the taste of every food, so in heavenly beatitude there is promised to us the abundance of all goods, with which we shall be fully satisfied and which we shall enjoy eternally.

It is said that this manna is hidden because, according to Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:9: "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."

This manna is hidden in God. Colossians 3:3-5: "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols."

The second reward is glory: and will give him a white counter - that is, glory, or the brightness of the body, without stain and without any defect.

And in the counter, a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it. By this new name is understood the special excellence which God will grant to each one according to what he shall have done in his body. For one is the brightness of virgins, and another the brightness of martyrs; another again is the brightness of spouses; the brightness of the Apostles is not the same as that of the Prophets. One virgin differs from another in brightness, one apostle from another, one confessor from another, one martyr from another, one prophet from another; and all differ among themselves in the brightness of their glory, as is seen in the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians 15:41: "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

This is why the text adds: which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it - that is, the excellence proper to each one. No one will share in it except the one who has received it, in the same way as the individuality proper to each person cannot be possessed or shared by any other.

The word knoweth must therefore not be taken in a literal sense, but metaphorically; for one saint will certainly know the excellence and glory of another, as is seen in theology.

A name written - that is, established and engraved with the iron stylus of eternity, so that it can never again be removed.

§ 4. On the Fourth Age of the Church Militant, Called the Peaceful Age, from Pope Saint Leo III and the Emperor Charlemagne Until Leo X and Charles V. Chapter 2, Verses 18-29

I. VERSE 18. And to the angel of the church of Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God. The fourth age of the Church began with Charlemagne and the holy Pope Leo III, and lasted until Charles V and Leo X. In this age there flourished several great saints among kings and emperors, and ecclesiastics as learned as they were pious; and it was not stained by any heresy for more than two hundred years. It is therefore with reason called the peaceful and illuminative age (pacificus).

We find its type in the description of the Church of Thyatira; for the word Thyatira is interpreted in the sense of "illuminated" and "living victim," as the fourth age of the Church perfectly was.

To this fourth age belongs the fourth day of creation, when God made the luminous bodies and the stars which He placed in heaven.

To this age also belongs the fourth Spirit of the Lord, namely the spirit of piety, which God then poured out abundantly upon His Church.

In the same way, one may also apply to this fourth age of the Church the fourth epoch of the world, which lasted from Moses until the completion of the temple of Solomon. For just as David then composed psalms and increased divine worship, and just as his son Solomon built

a very vast temple and ordered the most precious vessels for the service of the altars and of the temple; as he also established an admirable order in sacred things, and raised the majesty of the sacrifices by the good discipline of the ministers; and finally, as he reigned peacefully, without any enemy - so also, in the fourth age, the most useful councils were celebrated for rebuilding the fallen Church.

The Christian religion flourished everywhere, and the Church lived in peace, free from every enemy and every heresy. Chant, psalms, the breviary, rites, ceremonies, and the ministry of the altar were restored to a better order, and even to a certain perfection.

Therefore these words follow: And to the angel of the church of Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet like to fine brass.

He calls Himself here the Son of God, because the mysteries of His divinity and His humanity had already been clarified and purged of the errors of Arius and of the other heretics. It is therefore with reason that Christ, victorious over His enemies in this fourth age of the Church, says in triumph: These things saith the Son of God.

By the eyes like a flame of fire is understood the perfect knowledge of truth; and by the feet like to fine brass He designates the stability and firmness of the body of Christ, which is the Church. For once the tyrants of paganism had been conquered, and the darkness of heretics had disappeared, the Church enjoyed repose in the perfect knowledge of the truth of the Catholic faith, very solidly established and protected by the power of princes and kings.

That is why He no longer says here: "like to fine brass when it is in a burning furnace," etc., but simply: like to fine brass - that is, already purified by so many persecutions and tried by the frightful cruelty of tyrants and heretics. These two things are placed at the head as so many trophies and spoils of the victory which Christ won over His enemies through the members of the Church, His beloved spouse, and through His faithful soldiers. He adds: like to a flame of fire, because the faith of Christ and the truth shone in the fourth age and spread throughout the whole universe.

VERSE 19. I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy ministry, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former.

There follows the customary commendation, which consists of six points: the works of the Church, the perfection of her faith, her charity, her ministry, her patience, and her perseverance in good.

The first commendation is found in these words: I know thy works of justice, piety, and mercy, which are holy and done with a pure intention.

The second: thy faith. For here He praises the Church for her faith, as for a special prerogative and perfection; because in the fourth age the Catholic faith was unanimous, perfect, and spread, in a manner of speaking, throughout the whole universe. And the Church was free from every heresy for more than two hundred years, until Berengarius, in the time of Emperor Henry III, arose in Gaul in the year 1048 and taught that the body and blood of Christ are not in the holy Eucharist. This heresy having been destroyed, the Church again enjoyed her rest until the year 1117, as may be seen in ecclesiastical history.

The third: thy charity toward God and neighbour.

The fourth: thy ministry of the altar and care for the poor, a ministry which flourished at that time. For not only a considerable number of very great ecclesiastical saints, but even emperors, kings, princes, and other exalted persons founded hospitals and cared for the poor, whom they themselves served. Moreover, they built churches, repaired those which were in ruins, built monasteries, colleges, bishoprics, temples, altars, and put everything into

action to favour the worship of God. Even at night the sacred praises resounded in collegiate churches and cloisters. Therefore the ministry of the altar and of the poor was holy, well ordered, and precious before the Lord.

The fifth: thy patience in fasts, hairshirts, vigils, and the other rigours of penance which the saints of that time constantly practised for the love of Jesus Christ. Among them are distinguished Saint Vigilius, Saint Rupert and his twelve companions, Saint Willibald, Saint Wunibald, Saint Walburga, Saint Louis the King, Otto bishop of Bamberg, Lothair the Emperor, Otto the Great, Blessed Nilus, Saint Stephen the first king of Hungary, Saint Wenceslaus prince of Bohemia, and others who, by their tireless labour and patience, converted the remnants of the Gentiles to the Catholic faith.

Finally, the sixth commendation: and thy last works which are more than the former. These words praise the perfection and holiness which, in the fourth age, shone constantly in the saints: such as Henry and Cunegonde, Saint Wolfgang, Saint Bruno, Saint Romuald, Saint Robert, Saint Bernard, Saint Francis, Saint Dominic with their families, Saint Yves the bishop, and others who, in the succession of times, illustrated the Church. This was without doubt an admirable benefit of God and a special prerogative granted to this age.

Therefore He adds: And thy works of justice, faith, piety, charity, ministry, labour, patience, and holiness. Thy last works which are more than the former. This is a manner of speaking by which we are accustomed to praise the abundance of fruits, the multiplication of goods, the perfection, fidelity, and constancy of the virtues and actions of men.

II. VERSE 20. But I have against thee a few things: because thou sufferest the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants, to commit fornication, and to eat of things sacrificed to idols.

While the Church was at rest amid riches and honours, and while she believed herself secure under the patronage of pious emperors, kings, and princes, she gradually relaxed in ecclesiastical discipline; and there was introduced among Christians a certain effeminate softness, which is here metaphorically designated by the woman.

Then also the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life were increasing among the ministers of the Church. For these men, assured of the indulgence of a corrupt age and believing themselves secure, gave themselves over to pleasure and fell into presumption, as ordinarily happens in such a case.

Now these were the vices of Jezabel, wife of Achab, whom Scripture calls a courtesan. There is the concupiscence of the flesh. Then this woman seized the vineyard of Naboth, whom she had killed: there is the concupiscence of the eyes. Then she painted her face and her eyes: there is the pride of life. Finally, seeing herself established in complete security upon her sins, she became presumptuous and had the prophets killed. She laid snares for Elijah in order to put him to death, refusing to believe his word when he foretold to her all the misfortunes of her house - misfortunes which she herself saw partly fulfilled, as, for example, the famine. For she said in her heart: These evils shall not fall upon us.

Now it is thus that we, miserable sinners, sunk in the things of this world, are accustomed to sleep in the death of sin until at last the wrath of God bursts upon our heads.

Jezabel is therefore cited here as an example and comparison in this sense: You permit little by little, by not carefully closing the five doors of your senses, through which death enters you as through windows. You permit, by paying no attention to ecclesiastical discipline, by not watching over your subordinates, by not visiting them, and by taking little or no care of them. You permit, by not duly chastising vice, but by favouring it through cowardly connivance, disguising it through a false philosophy, and leaving everything unpunished. You

permit, by neglecting fraternal correction, occupying yourselves only with your private interests, being indulgent toward yourselves, without attaching yourselves to the public good. You permit, by granting dispensations easily in all things, and by relaxing the holy canons. You permit, by not enlightening others through good example, and by not instructing your inferiors by the sound word of God. You permit, by saying: These things are permitted, while they are not; and in this way you favour the entrance of dissolution and vices.

It was thus that, through the cohabitation of women, lust and concubinage were introduced into the Church. It was also through the superabundance of private riches that avarice, which is idolatry, spread. Moreover, the honours and dignities to which emperors, kings, and princes raised ecclesiastics favoured the pride of life. Finally, liberty in the manner of living and in discipline engendered idleness; and idleness made morals dissolute.

You permit the woman - that is, softness and an effeminate manner of living - to penetrate among you; a defect or vice generally designated by the woman. The text adds Jezabel in order to signify more special vices which were gradually introduced into this age of the Church, such as the concupiscence of the flesh, avarice, pride, and presumption.

He also adds: who calleth herself a prophetess - that is, amid this licentious life, the Church promised herself security and said: I shall no longer see the severity of tyrants and heresiarchs, because I am rich and powerful; and I am at peace; I have pious and powerful emperors, kings, and princes who protect me; therefore I shall no longer see mourning. Thus did that corrupt generation prophesy.

III. Therefore these words follow: Thou sufferest the woman Jezabel, etc., to teach and to seduce my servants by the bad example of lust, avarice, and pride.

To teach and to seduce, by promising the security of peace and happiness; by not announcing to the people the wrath of God and the chastisement which threatens it from afar because of the sins of the flesh, avarice, irreligion, and forgetfulness of God - a chastisement nevertheless imminent, which the Church and all of us, miserable as we are, continue to undergo in this fifth age, and by which our teeth are set on edge.

To commit fornication, and to eat of things sacrificed to idols. Fornication was carried to such an excess in the Greek Church that it went so far as to teach that it is lawful. And this fatal doctrine of the Greeks was put into practice by many members of the Latin Church, who did not blush at the illicit commerce which, unfortunately, is still maintained in our own days with concubines.

And to eat of things sacrificed to idols. This passage is also understood of avarice, which Saint Paul calls idolatry. For shameful gains and profits, exactions by which the poor are oppressed, simony, interested gifts, and services unjustly rewarded are all so many abuses of which employees unworthy of their offices, and men given to avarice, make themselves guilty. Now all these abuses are metaphorically designated by these words: And to eat of things sacrificed to idols.

VERSE 21. And I gave her a time that she might do penance. These words designate the long-suffering of the mercy of God, which awaited the penance of the Greek Church for centuries, until at last this Church, refusing to obey the Lord and unwilling to return to unity, perished under Mahomet II, who killed Constantine Palaeologus and took possession of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Empire.

It was with the same patience that God also awaited the penance of the Latin Church in the fourth age, from Charlemagne until Berengarius the Sacramentarian, who was the precursor of the future scourge of God. After him, the Church was again tranquil and free from every heresy until the Emperor Henry V, under whom Durandus of Marseille appeared in the year

1117. Then heresies succeeded one another, as forerunners of the future scourge of God. These heresies were, however, destroyed by the goodness of princes and by the providence of God; until finally, under Charles V and Leo X, in the year 1517, Luther, that horrible heresiarch, the scourge of the Latin Church, recalled all the heresies from hell and vomited them from his impure mouth over almost the whole of Europe.

Finally Jesus Christ says: And I gave her a time that she might do penance, and she will not repent of her fornication. These words announced that the Latin Church was to persevere in the vices indicated above, and that she would take no step toward penance, even at the sight of her calamities.

And this is also why her chastisement is foretold to her in the absolute future, whereas in the preceding ages this chastisement was announced only in a threatening manner. For the Apostle continues with these words:

V. VERSE 22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed. That is to say, I will strike her with tribulations upon her bed of pain and mourning; upon her bed of leprosy and spiritual diseases, which are heresies; upon her bed of plague, famine, and wars; upon her bed of darkness, distress, and poverty; upon her bed of tears and desolation; upon her bed of oppression, bitterness, and captivity, from which she will not be able to rise; and finally upon her bed of eternal damnation.

And they that commit adultery with her shall be in very great tribulation - by cooperating in her evil works, by imitating them, counselling them, tolerating them, or not preventing them when they can and ought to do so. All these shall be in the greatest affliction: in temporal affliction, as has just been said, and in eternal affliction, beyond which there is no greater.

But Jesus Christ nevertheless adds: Except they do penance from their works, in which they personally participate. For often, some temporal punishment and ruin assigned to the reigns and ages of the Church in a general and absolute manner - as, for example, the bed spoken of above - may nevertheless be avoided, at least as regards condemnation and the punishment of the fire of hell, if the members of the Church, taken individually, do salutary and worthy penance.

VERSE 23. And I will kill her children with death. By these words Jesus Christ threatens us with wars, seditions, famine, and plague - chastisements which divine justice is accustomed to send in its vengeance, striking the posterity and the children of the children of the impenitent. This is what we, unhappy as we are, experience only too much in this fifth age, while we see over the whole surface of the globe nothing but wars, seditions, and misfortunes, as the sequel will show.

And all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts. The reins - that is, I am He who knows the effects of concupiscence and carnal works. And the hearts - for all evil thoughts are before My eyes.

How many men, in this fourth age of the Church, abused the long-suffering of God, who was waiting for them to do penance out of regard for the merits and prayers of the saints, their contemporaries? And these hardened sinners fell deeply asleep in their sins, forgetting God their Creator and giving themselves without restraint to libertinism, as though there were no God capable of searching out the iniquity of the wicked.

The Lord permitted that in the fifth age of the Church there should also arise carnal men who, not content with bringing to light a multitude of new sects, reproduced and recalled from hell all those which had appeared before. And to these unhappy sects we owe the most terrible tribulations: wars, seditions, massacres, famine, plague, and other incalculable evils which they drew upon the Church. God permitted these misfortunes in order to force the

faithful at last to open their eyes and recognise that there are no evils in Israel which the Lord has not inflicted in His vengeance.

That is why it is said: And all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts. That is, I am He who examines and punishes concupiscence and perverse thoughts.

And I will give to every one of you according to your works. He first spoke of temporal punishments, because most of the time it happens that the just suffer with the wicked; and God permits this so that they may acquire greater merits. Sometimes even the just are struck by tribulations more than the impious, as daily experience proves to us.

But Jesus Christ speaks in the second place of the eternal punishment which awaits only the impious and impenitent; and this is a difference which ought to be the greatest consolation for the just, and an immense terror for the wicked. Therefore He adds: And I will give to every one of you according to your works, without any respect of persons. He will inflict eternal punishment on those who serve the world, the flesh, and the devil; and He will give eternal glory to those who live in God by observing His commandments.

VI. VERSE 24. But to you I say, and to the rest who are at Thyatira: Whosoever have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will not put upon you any other burden.

Here Christ consoles His friends concerning the evil which He was to permit for the advantage of His Church. And His friends were numerous, as we have said of the saints of God, in this fourth age.

But to you I say, My friends, and to the rest who are at Thyatira - that is, I speak to all those who shall show themselves to be the living victim of My Father, and who shall live the spiritual life in this fourth age of the Church.

Whosoever have not this doctrine - that is, all those who fear the Lord and have not allowed themselves to be seduced by the presumption of sin. This presumption or security is called doctrine because of the false belief of the wicked, who willingly persuade themselves in their sins that no evil will happen to them, looking only at the happiness and duration of prosperous times granted to the impious by the long-suffering and goodness of God.

And who have not known the depths of Satan. The depth of Satan may be considered under three aspects: the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life; for it is by these that the devil dared to tempt Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father.

These temptations are called depths because of the elevation and difficulty of the objects with which Satan tempts men - objects which he presents to our weak eyes as the only possible goods, causing us to forget the only true goods to come.

The word known is taken here metaphorically, for adhering, loving, attaching oneself, as it is said of man in Scripture that he "knows his wife" (cognoscere uxorem, etc.). Therefore Jesus Christ says: And who have not known the depths of Satan - that is, who have not committed fornication with those three idols of Satan which Jezabel preaches or teaches.

I will not put upon you any other burden. Jesus Christ speaks here, in passing, of the presumption of heretics and bad Christians, who are accustomed to prophesy and to seduce the people by their falsehoods, saying, for example: The Church will not always last; she will become sterile; she will perish and will be destroyed.

Contrary to this false belief of the wicked - a belief which is accustomed to plunge the good into desolation because of the permission of so many and such long calamities which afflict

them - Christ consoles His Church here, saying: I will not put upon you any other burden heavier than that which is written in the book of Psalms 88:31: "And if his children forsake my law," etc.; "I will visit their iniquities with a rod," etc.; "But my mercy I will not take away from him," etc.

VERSE 25. Yet that which you have, hold fast till I come. Jesus Christ here exhorts the good, so that, overcoming the evil mingled with the good and despising the calamities of the times, they may preserve innocence and persevere in being the good grain which the heavenly Father has always reserved for Himself, even in the midst of the cockle.

Innocence of morals is above all necessary for the prelates of the Church; and when temporal misfortunes threaten us, and prevarication is at its height, they must, by prudently overcoming the evil introduced into the good, apply themselves to preserving their own conscience and that of their flocks in the greatest purity.

One may also perfectly relate to this passage the parable of the cockle, which must be allowed to remain until the harvest, Matthew 13. For it is said: Yet that which you have, hold fast till I come - that is, wait until I come for the extermination of the impious, to punish the wicked and cause My wrath to burst forth in the scourges which I have prepared in their time for the renewal and amendment of My Church. Likewise, until I come at the universal judgment to render to each according to his works; until I come to restore the Church by holy and pure morals.

VERSE 26. And he that shall overcome and keep my works unto the end. By these words He exhorts to constancy and longanimity, virtues essentially necessary to the Catholic Church in every age. But these two virtues will be especially necessary to her in the fifth age, because of the duration of the evils which she will endure, and because of the power, malice, and insolence of the heretics and other false Christians who will afflict her.

From this follow these words: And he that shall overcome and keep my works unto the end. It is deliberately that He adds my works, because just as, in each age, certain mysteries were more particularly attacked, so in the fifth age His works concerning human liberty, grace, and predestination will be especially attacked.

My works: the cooperation of the human will, the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance, the precepts of the Decalogue, celibacy, and everything that is honourable, etc.

My works: that is, miracles, the canonisation of saints, etc., all of which are works of Christ - works which He points out to all the good who will live in the fifth age of the Church, in order to warn them beforehand and to urge them to preserve these works.

VERSE 27. And he that shall overcome and keep my works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessel of a potter they shall be broken. VERSE 28. As I also have received of my Father.

There follows in these words, to confirm His servants in patience and in the bearing of the calamities which He foretells to us in advance, a very great spiritual consolation and a rich reward in the conversion of the Gentiles and heretics to the true faith. This conversion will take place in the sixth age of the Church. For the fifth is an age of affliction, punishment, and defection, as we shall see below.

Therefore He says: I will give him power over the nations - spiritual power to prelates in the unity of faith, and temporal power to kings in monarchy and in the unity of peoples.

And they shall be broken as the vessel of a potter. From the hardening of their hearts they shall be converted to the shepherd of their souls. Likewise, the republics which had fallen away shall be dissolved, and power shall fail the rebels. This power shall be broken by My

most powerful Anointed One whom I shall send, etc. All this is explained later at length and in detail.

As I also have received of my Father. Jesus Christ adds these words for the consolation of His servants - the greatest consolation there could be. Philippians 2:8: "Jesus Christ humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

As I also have received of my Father. For by His patience Jesus Christ conquered all things; He subjected all creatures to Himself; and by the glorious combats of the martyrs He broke all nations like a vile and contemptible vessel of clay, etc.

And I will give him the morning star. Here He promises to the Catholic Church a new light which will appear in the sixth age, and which is designated by the morning star. For the morning star signifies that the night has passed and the day has come.

And I will give him the morning star - that is, the light of the true faith, of the Catholic faith, which shall shine with all its splendour beginning from the sixth age of the Church, after the darkness of all heresies has been relegated to hell.

And I will give him the morning star - that is, after the darkness of this life, I will give to each one in particular the heavenly light in which he shall contemplate eternal truth without end.

VERSE 29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. This passage is explained as above.

CHAPTER 3

Letters to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

Revelation 3:1–22

The Three Last Ages of the Church Militant

§ 1. On the Fifth Age of the Church Militant, Called the Age of Affliction, Beginning from Leo X and Charles V Until the Holy Pontiff and the Powerful Monarch. Chapter 3, Verses 1-6

VERSE 1. And to the angel of the church of Sardis, write: These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works.

I. The fifth age of the Church began under the Emperor Charles V and Pope Leo X, about the year 1520. It will last until the holy Pontiff and the powerful Monarch who shall come in our age and shall be called the help of God - that is, restoring all things. The fifth age is an age of affliction, desolation, humiliation, and poverty for the Church, and it may rightly be called a purgative age (purgativus).

For it is in this age that Jesus Christ has purified, and will purify, His wheat by cruel wars, by seditions, by famine and plague, and by other horrible calamities, afflicting and impoverishing the Latin Church by many heresies, and also by bad Christians who shall take from her a great number of bishoprics, almost innumerable monasteries, very rich provostships, and so forth. The Church will see herself oppressed and impoverished by the impositions and exactions of Catholic princes, so that we may rightly groan now and say with the prophet Jeremias in Lamentations 1:1: "The queen of cities is tributary."

For the Church is humbled and abased, because she is blasphemed by heretics and by bad Christians; her ministers are despised, and there is no longer honour or respect for them. It is by this that God will purify His wheat and cast the chaff into the fire, while He gathers the good grain to place it in His barn.

Finally, this fifth age of the Church is an age of affliction, an age of extermination, an age of defection filled with calamities. For there will remain few Christians on the earth who shall have been spared by the sword, famine, or plague. Kingdoms shall fight against kingdoms, and all states shall be desolated by internal dissensions. Principalities and monarchies shall be overthrown; there shall be an almost general impoverishment and a very great desolation in the world. These misfortunes are already in part accomplished, and they shall yet be accomplished.

God will permit them by a most just judgment, because of the full measure of our sins which we and our fathers shall have committed during the time of His generosity in waiting for us to do penance.

The Church of Sardis is a type of this fifth age. For the word Sardis means "principle of beauty," that is, the beginning of the perfection which shall follow in the sixth age. Indeed,

tribulations, impoverishment, and other adversities are the beginning and cause of the conversion of men, just as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now we fear God and open our eyes when the waters and waves of tribulations assail us. On the contrary, while we are in prosperity, each one under his fig tree, in his vineyard, in the shade of honours, in riches and repose, we forget God our Creator and sin in all security. This is why divine Providence has wisely ordained that His Church, which He wills to preserve until the consummation of the ages, should always be watered by the waters of tribulations, like a gardener who waters his plants in time of drought.

To this age also belongs the fifth Spirit of the Lord, which is the spirit of counsel. For He uses this spirit to avert calamities, or to prevent greater evils. He also uses it to preserve good or to procure still greater goods. Now divine Wisdom communicated the spirit of counsel to His Church principally in the fifth age: 1. By afflicting her, so that she might not be entirely corrupted by riches, pleasures, and honours, and to prevent her from perishing. 2. By placing the Council of Trent like a light in the darkness, so that Christians who saw it might know what they ought to believe amid the confusion of so many sects which the heresiarch Luther spread throughout the world. Without this Council of Trent, a far greater number of Christians would have abandoned the Catholic faith, so great at that time was the divergence of opinions. Men scarcely knew what they ought to believe. 3. By setting Saint Ignatius and his Society diametrically against this heresiarch and against the mass of the impious of that age; for by their zeal, holiness, and doctrine, they prevented the Catholic faith from being altogether extinguished in Europe. 4. By His wise counsel, God also caused the Catholic faith and the Church, which had been banished from the greater part of Europe, to be transported into the Indies, China, Japan, and other distant countries, where it now flourishes, and where the holy name of the Lord is known and glorified, and so forth.

This fifth age is also figured by the fifth epoch of the world, which lasted from the death of Solomon until the Babylonian captivity inclusively. For: a. Just as in that fifth epoch of the world Israel fell into idolatry through the counsel of Jeroboam, and only Judah and Benjamin remained in the worship of the true God, so, in the fifth age, a very great part of the Latin Church abandoned the true faith and fell into heresies, leaving in Europe only a small number of good Catholics. b. As, because of its conduct, the synagogue and the whole Jewish nation were afflicted by the Gentiles and often delivered over to pillage, so also now, with what calamities are not Christians, the Roman Empire, and the other kingdoms afflicted? Do not England, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, France, and the other states of Europe serve as witnesses for us, and do they not have to deplore their evils with bitter tears, and even with tears of blood? c. Just as Assur came from Babylon with the Chaldeans to seize Jerusalem, destroy its temple, burn the city, despoil the sanctuary, and lead the people of God into captivity, so, in this fifth age, must we not fear that the Turks will soon break in and weave sinister plans against the Latin Church - and this because of the full measure of our crimes and our greatest abominations? d. Just as in the fifth epoch the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah were considerably weakened and continued to weaken more and more, until finally first the kingdom of Israel and then that of Judah were entirely destroyed, so also in this fifth age we see that the Roman Empire has been divided, and is now so agitated that we must fear it will perish as the Eastern Empire perished in the year 1452.

Finally, the fifth day of the creation of the world also belongs to this fifth age, when God commanded the waters to bring forth all kinds of fish and creeping things, and when He created the birds of heaven. Now these two kinds of animals figure the greatest liberty; for what is more free than a fish in the water, or a bird in the air? Thus, metaphorically, in this fifth age we find the earth and the water full of creeping things and birds. For carnal men abound who, having abused liberty of conscience, and not content with the concessions recently granted to them in the treaty of peace, creep and fly after the objects of their

pleasure and concupiscence. Each one believes and does what he wills.

To them apply the words of the Apostle Saint Jude, verse 10, in his Catholic Epistle, when he says: "These men blaspheme whatever things they know not; and what things soever they naturally know, like dumb beasts, in these they are corrupted... These are spots in their banquets, feasting together without fear, feeding themselves, clouds without water, which are carried about by winds; trees of the autumn, unfruitful, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion; wandering stars: to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever... Murmurers, full of complaints, walking according to their own desires, and their mouth speaketh proud things, admiring persons for gain's sake... These are they who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the Spirit."

Now it is thus that, in this miserable age of the Church, men relax the divine and human precepts, and discipline is enervated - without sinews. The holy Canons are counted as nothing, and the laws of the Church are no better observed by the clergy than civil laws are among the people. Hence we are like creeping things on the earth and in the sea, and like birds in the air: each one is carried away to believe and to do what he wills, according to the instinct of the flesh.

II. From this follows: These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. These seven Spirits of God are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ sent throughout the world and revealed to the nations in the truth of the faith. The seven stars designate the universality of bishops and doctors, as has been shown above.

These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars - that is, Jesus, the Son of God, to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth, has in His power the seven spirits of the truth of the faith, and the seven stars: the prelates and doctors whom He can take from us and transport to distant nations because of our great crimes, and because of the hardness of our hearts and our unbelief.

This is what He did when He permitted the light of faith to abandon the greater part of Europe, to be transported to the ends of the Indies, which were plunged in the darkness of paganism. He enlightened those nations by the ministry of Saint Francis Xavier and other doctors.

If we do not do penance as soon as possible, conforming our life to that of Jesus Christ, there is reason to fear that this light of faith may be altogether taken from us. By these words, therefore, Christ wishes to awaken His Church by a salutary fear, because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And since God can send us no greater scourge than that of blinding His people, by taking from them the gift of the true faith through false doctors whom He raises up in place of the true, as punishment for our abominations and our impenitent hearts, we must therefore, touched by holy fear and covered with sackcloth and ashes, come to prostrate ourselves humbly at the feet of Jesus Christ and say to Him with the Royal Prophet, Psalm 50:13: "Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit," and so forth.

I know thy works. By these words He reproaches the works of this fifth age. I know - that is, thy evil works are not hidden from Me; thy works full of imperfections; thy false and hypocritical works, which have the outward appearance of piety but not the truth of charity.

Thy works - that is, thy pomp, thy splendour, and thy exterior holiness.

I know thy works: I am not ignorant, I who am the searcher of hearts, that in general thy works appear good outwardly, but inwardly they are evil and bring death.

This is why He says and adds: Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead. Now we may have the name of living spiritually in Jesus Christ, the principle of life, in three ways: 1. By faith in Jesus Christ; and from this we bear the name of Christians. 2. By works of justice and charity in Jesus Christ, by whose life every man lives who is not in the state of mortal sin and is in the grace of God. 3. By the observance of the evangelical counsels; by the sacred orders of the episcopate, priesthood, and so forth; by the vows one makes in devoting oneself specially to the religious life, abandoning the pomps, riches, and pleasures of the age, and consecrating oneself to God alone and to His Christ.

Now Jesus Christ reproaches the fifth age above all for being stained with the particular vice of falsely attributing to itself the name of living in Him, while living in an entirely different manner. This is proved by induction: 1. All the heretics who, in the fifth age, are almost as numerous as locusts upon the earth, glory in the name of Christ. They say that they are true Christians and that they live in Jesus Christ; and yet all are dead and shall die eternally, unless they do penance and return to themselves. They have God and His Son Jesus only on their lips, while they have the devil in their heart and the world in their arms. 2. How many thousands of Christians have grown cold in this age of calamity! Considering only the happy success obtained in all things by the heretics, and maliciously observing the morals of ecclesiastics and their manner of life, they indeed preserve the name of Catholics because of a certain fear and human respect, but inwardly they are dead in atheism and indifferentism, in Calvinism and pseudo-politicism, and in hatred against priests.

They have the name of living, because they feign piety. They pretend to have religion; they present themselves as conscientious people by communicating with Catholics and by confessing, in the presence of princes and great men, that they belong to the true faith. They even allow themselves to be employed in pious works and favour them; they see religious and frequent them; they make a show of zeal in their words, in their counsels, and even by a certain exterior zeal for the building of monasteries and colleges, for example. But they do all this in order to have the name of living beings, and to put themselves in favour with men and with the great. They seek to gain the confidence of the world by this appearance of piety and religion, so that afterward they may more easily succeed in their plots and obscure designs.

3. If we examine in detail the small number of Catholics, their justice will appear to us as disgusting as a filthy rag; for most of them give themselves only to pleasures, and are dead in sin. They serve only to be seen. They glory in exterior things, and seem not to know that the sheep is not received without wool; for their Christian charity has grown cold, and they seek only their comfort and personal advantage.

Ordinarily one finds neither justice nor equity in the courts, but only acceptance of persons and gifts, so that lawsuits are endless. Humility is almost unknown in this age, and has had to yield its place to display and vain glory, which are excused under the name of propriety and rank. Christian simplicity is ridiculed and treated as folly and stupidity, while elevated learning is regarded as wisdom - and so is the talent of obscuring, by foolish questions and complicated arguments, all the axioms of law, the precepts of morality, the holy canons, and the dogmas of religion. Thus there is no principle so holy, so authentic, so ancient, and so certain that it can be exempt from the censures, criticisms, interpretations, modifications, delimitations, and questions of men, and so forth.

Churches are indeed frequented, but no reverence is shown there in the presence of Almighty God. People laugh there, talk there, look here and there, jest there, and provoke one another with glances, and so forth. The body is adorned with beautiful clothing, while the soul is stained by the defilements of vice.

The word of God is neglected, despised, and turned into ridicule. There is no longer esteem for Sacred Scripture; it is Machiavelli, Bodin, and all like them who alone are esteemed and appreciated.

Only the mind is cultivated, and not the heart, in the education of children; they are made disobedient, dissolute, fine talkers, chatterers, and irreligious. Parents love them with a disorderly love, hiding their faults, not correcting them, and not making domestic discipline observed. One ought to make of the child a simple and good son, a lover of truth, a true Christian, upright and just; but far greater care is taken that he should become a politician or a scholar. Only when he speaks several languages and has been trained in foreign manners will he be considered a young man of good hope and an accomplished citizen. It will be further required that he know how to feign, dissemble, speak and feel in a new way, adapt himself to everything, and imitate everything like a stage-player. Finally, he must seek his pleasures only in novelties, and so forth.

Thus this age makes its justice and its life consist in falsehood, in outward pomp, in fashion, and in the applause of men, while it neglects true and inward justice, which alone can please God.

4. I shall say nothing of ecclesiastics and religious, how miserable they are; for many of them have the name of being alive, and they are dead, and so forth. This detail must suffice to prove that it is with reason that Jesus Christ addresses reproaches to this fifth age of the Church, saying to it: Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead.

Oh, how few men there are in this age who are truly alive, serving the Lord their God and being the friends of His Christ! The meaning of these words, then, is this: Thou hast the name of being alive, but thou art dead in false doctrine; thou art dead in atheism and pseudo-politicism; thou art dead in hypocrisy and simulated justice; thou art dead in thy hidden sins, in the secret of thy abominations; thou art dead in pleasures and delights; thou art dead in shamelessness, jealousy, and pride; thou art dead in sins of the flesh, in ignorance of the mysteries and of the things necessary for salvation; finally, thou art dead in irreligion and contempt of the word of God; for all charity, which is the only and true life in Jesus Christ, has grown cold in thee.

III. VERSE 2. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. By these words He exhorts the pontiffs, prelates, and doctors to vigilance and pastoral solicitude. These ought to be all the greater because the times are more evil and more difficult, and because many wolves have slipped into the world among the sheep; for that very reason the sheep are more exposed to corruption, rapacity, and the danger of perishing, unless they find firm support in the vigilance and solicitude of prelates.

It is therefore deliberately that He says: Be watchful in praying to God for those entrusted to thee, and for the weak in faith. Be watchful in love for sinners. Now the foundation of true vigilance and pastoral solicitude consists in praying frequently, humbly, and devoutly for one's sheep: for the good, that they may be preserved; for the weak, that they may be relieved and strengthened; and finally for the wicked, in order to bring them back to truth and justice, and so forth.

Be watchful over thy person, so that thy thoughts, words, and works may be holy and irreproachable; so that thou mayest be chaste, sober, modest, and not angry, violent, or tyrannical.

Be watchful over thy house and household, so that thy dwelling may be holy and pure from all fornications and scandals.

Be watchful to preserve sound and orthodox doctrine, in order to preach it to adults and teach it to children.

Be watchful; and let each one do his duty: the bishop, the prelate, and so forth.

Be watchful and take care to visit, examine, correct, exhort, console, and protect the prelates, parish priests, and preachers who are under thy jurisdiction.

Be watchful to provide all thy subordinates who are in sound doctrine with good bishops, good prelates, good parish priests, and other good shepherds of souls.

Be watchful against the malice of heretics, against bad books, against false Christians, depraved morals, public vices, scandal, theft, adultery, and so forth.

And strengthen - that is, preserve what remains of Catholics who, little by little, by falling into heresy and atheism, are dying for lack of pastoral vigilance, and so forth.

The text deliberately speaks in a conditional sense: Strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die, because: 1. As has been said, the remnants of Catholics were preserved in Europe by the help of the Council of Trent, the Society of Jesus, and other pious men; and without these remedies all would have fallen into heresy and would have died spiritually. 2. These words are put in a conditional sense so that bishops, prelates, and other shepherds of souls may understand that the salvation or death of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ does not depend on chance or on a blind predestination of God, as cowards and the impious may imagine. Rather, let them know that the life of souls depends on vigilance and solicitude, and that eternal death comes from the scandal and negligence of pastors.

IV. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. Here again Jesus Christ commands us and makes the necessity of watching resound in our ears by the voice of the prophet, because we are in evil times and in an age full of dangers and calamities.

Heresy everywhere gains the upper hand again and raises its head; its body is strengthened more than ever, and its followers have obtained power almost everywhere. They are triumphant in the Empire, in kingdoms, and in republics; and they have enriched themselves with the spoils of the Church. This is why many Catholics become lukewarm; why the lukewarm fall away; and why a great number conceive scandal in their hearts.

War is also a cause of ignorance, even in the essential things of faith. The corruption of morals increases in the camps and among soldiers, to whom good pastors, good preachers, and good catechists are rarely granted. Hence the generation remains rough, coarse, and inflexible; ignorant of everything, or almost everything; troubling itself neither with God, nor heaven, nor what is honourable. Knowing only rapine, theft, blasphemy, and falsehood, it studies only how to deceive its neighbour, and so forth.

In the Catholic faith, most are lukewarm, ignorant, deceived by the heretics, who applaud their own prosperity, rejoice in it, and turn true believers into ridicule, seeing them afflicted, impoverished, and desolate. At the same time, no one studies the sacred sciences, because parents are poor, and there is only desolation in most seminaries, which no longer enjoy their revenues and foundation rents.

From what has just been said, and from still other miseries, one clearly understands how great is the danger that threatens the Catholic faith in the Roman Empire. Be watchful, then, O bishops and prelates of the Church of God! Take counsel among yourselves, and reflect maturely with your sheep on the means of procuring for them, in this urgent necessity, pious, zealous, and learned priests who, by their sound word and good examples, shine like a light before the eyes of their sheep, to lead them into good pasture and confirm them in the

Catholic faith.

Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die; for I find not thy works full before my God. Here Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks as man and as the invisible Head of the Church. The Divinity, in the infinite abyss of His eternal foreknowledge, revealed to Him the defects and sins of the future pastors and other members of the Church, and at the same time conferred upon Him the mission of correcting them.

Jesus Christ therefore bases His reproach on the lack of pastoral vigilance and solicitude of which we have spoken above - vigilance and solicitude which God nevertheless requires from the bishops and prelates of the Church. This is why He uses the conjunction for, which unites what precedes with what follows, namely: Be watchful... for I find not thy works full before my God.

That is: thou dost not fulfil thy duty as thou couldst and as thou oughtest to do it. Thou art not sufficiently watchful, and thou hast not enough solicitude for the sheep entrusted to thee; for thy works are not full - that is, they are not perfect in charity - because thou hast little care for the salvation of souls.

For I find not thy works full with regard to ordinations, institutions, promotions, pastoral visitations, and discipline.

I find not thy works full, because thou dost not walk as I received commandment from My Father, and as I Myself walked, in humility, poverty, and the renunciation of the pomps of the age.

This, then, is why Jesus Christ says: For I find not thy works full, to express that they do not please His will, against which thou actest by taking care only of thyself, by being indulgent toward thy person in the blindness of thy self-love and thy pleasures. Thou affectest display; thou art swollen with honours; thou spendest My patrimony on the luxury of the table, the brilliance of courts, the splendour of palaces, a numerous household, the luxury of horses and carriages, the means of exalting and enriching thy relatives - in a word, on the pomp of the age.

Whereas, on the contrary, thou oughtest to employ thy revenues to feed the poor, console widows and orphans, and help Catholics in countries where they have been impoverished and despoiled by the depredations of heretics and other enemies of religion, and where they groan under the yoke for lack of human help. Thou oughtest also to employ thy benefice to favour the studies of young men who lack means, in order to supply the shortage of good pastors, and also to restore ruined churches.

And because all these works belong to the pastoral duty, and yet thou dost not accomplish them, I find not thy works full before My God, who knows thy faults, which will render thee inexcusable at His judgment.

V. VERSE 3. Have in mind therefore in what manner thou hast received and heard: and observe, and do penance. Here He applies the remedy to the evil. This remedy is composed of five things.

1. Have in mind therefore. These words recommend frequent meditation on a serious and important truth, and the constant and firm remembrance of pastoral duty. This remembrance, this meditation, is a duty as grave as it is important for bishops, prelates, and other pastors, who must make it the habitual subject of their reflections and engrave it deeply in their memory. The foundation and first remedy, therefore, for prelates, is to correct themselves of their faults and negligence, and to study and know the duties of their office.

2. This is why He says in the second place: Have in mind therefore in what manner thou hast received. By these words Jesus Christ designates the quality of the episcopal and pastoral office and duty, which are holy, which have been received by the ministry of angels, and which God has entrusted to men not as a kingdom or an earthly advantage, but for the salvation of souls. For them, He says, I, the eternal Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, came down from heaven, became man, was born in a stable, lodged among animals, lived in poverty and humility, conversed with men on earth for thirty-three years, and finally was crucified between two thieves.

O thou, prelate and pastor, thou hast not received this office to be honoured and incensed by men, to give thyself to pleasures and the delights of feasts, to amass gold and silver, to exalt and enrich thy relatives, or to seek the pomps of the age or the vanity of the world, but so that thou mightest be My imitator.

If thou desirest to be admitted among My elect, thou must show thyself pure and immaculate among men, whose model thou oughtest to be, all the more distinguished as the ministry thou hast received as an inheritance is higher, holier, and more perfect. Thy burden is heavy, full of labours, solicitude, and dangers. It therefore requires exact vigilance, the fear of God, continual and tireless prayer, chaste sobriety, and so forth.

Have in mind therefore in what manner thou hast received - that is, for what end thou wast instituted pontiff, bishop, prelate: namely, to feed the flock entrusted to thee, to shine like a light in darkness, to be the salt of the earth, and to season spiritually the souls and minds of men; finally, to be the head or chief which gives life to the members and to the ecclesiastical body.

Have in mind therefore in what manner thou hast received from My God so many gifts of nature, fortune, and freely given grace - not in order to enjoy these advantages arbitrarily, but to make them bear fruit like a faithful and useful servant. Thou hast not received these gifts to hide them in the napkin - a biblical expression - of thy self-love, or to bury them in the earth of pleasures and honours, but to make them bear fruit and profit spiritually for My God by thy works of mercy and charity. Thou must use them for widows and orphans, and for sustaining the poor and needy, after the example of My saints.

3. From this comes the third ingredient of the remedy: Have in mind therefore... what thou hast heard in My Gospel: how I conducted Myself among men, and how I gave My life for My sheep. Have in mind what thou hast heard in the Acts and life of My Apostles, what conduct they held. Have in mind what thou hast heard from thy fathers, thy predecessors: the pontiffs, bishops, and prelates of My Church. Thou knowest indeed that they were humble, poor, prudent, sober, chaste, full of solicitude, and adorned with all virtues. Therefore, after the example of thy Lord and Master, of the Apostles, and of the other saints and friends of My God, thou must live as they lived, and conduct thyself as they conducted themselves in this world.

Have in mind what thou hast heard of the life and conduct prescribed by the holy Canons, the writings of the holy Fathers, and the general, provincial, and diocesan councils. Have in mind what thou hast heard recently in the Council of Trent, of all its statutes concerning the life, honesty, and reform which must be observed.

4. This is why He immediately adds the fourth remedy: And observe. These words urge us to observe what has been said above, and they contain at the same time a particular reproach concerning the vice of this age, which consists in almost no longer observing anything of all these indicated duties. For our age is carnal and delicate; it glories in many things, especially in its sublime sciences. And because it knows much, it believes itself entitled to observe nothing.

We indeed have so many holy Canons, so many salutary general and synodal councils, so many good civil laws, spiritual books, interpreters of Sacred Scripture, so many writings of the holy Fathers full of strength and doctrine; finally, so many examples of the saints. And yet we act so little in good works! Ah! It is because we are the children of a carnal age. This is why Christ exhorts us and presses us to imitate and follow in our deeds the straight path which we know, and in which He and His saints walked, giving us an example.

5. The fifth remedy is contained in the words which follow: And do penance. The penance which He prescribes here contains three points: 1. Man must recognise and confess his fault. 2. He must ask pardon of God with a contrite and humbled heart. 3. He must correct himself of his sins, reform his life and conduct, and fulfil the satisfaction due for his faults.

Now, since the perverse generation of this fifth age of the Church does nothing less than all this, Christ therefore exhorts His Church above all to do salutary penance. He proposes it to us not only as the sole necessary remedy for restoring to spiritual life our soul dead in sin, but also as the means of appeasing the wrath of God, of turning away from us the evils which He has poured out upon this generation, and which He will yet pour out in torrents without end, if we do not do penance.

In spite of all this, no one wishes to be converted, as may be proved by induction. Indeed: 1. The heretics who are dead in their errors despise penance, and they do not recognise, or do not wish to recognise, their miserable state. They even glory in it and say that they act well, although they are dead. 2. Among Catholics, few are found who recognise their faults and sins. All bishops, prelates, and shepherds of souls say that they always fulfil their duty well, that they are watchful, and that they live as befits their state. Likewise emperors, kings, princes, counsellors, and judges glory in having acted well and in continuing to act well. All sacred orders claim to be innocent. Finally, the people themselves, from the first to the last, are accustomed to say: What evil have I done, and what evil am I doing? Thus all excuse themselves.

Therefore, so that divine Wisdom and Goodness might bring back to penance this generation, perverted and corrupted to the highest degree, it sent upon it almost continually the evils of war, plague, famine, and other calamities. It is also for this reason that it has quite recently afflicted all Germany by thirty years of continual and astonishing calamities, in order finally to make us open our eyes and oblige us to recognise our sins, and to implore the pardon and mercy of God with a contrite and humbled heart; and also to engage us to reform our life and conduct, each one according to the obligations of his state.

But instead of all this, we have become worse; and we are so blinded that we do not even wish to believe that we are plunged into these evils because of our sins, while Sacred Scripture nevertheless says: "There are no evils in Israel which the Lord has not sent." Hence there is reason to fear that the Lord will become still more exasperated in His wrath, with which He threatens us by the words that follow.

VI. VERSE 3. If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee.

1. After the prescription of the remedy follows a terrible threat against the Church of God. If then thou shalt not watch, after having finally awakened from the deep sleep of thy pleasures, thy laziness, and thy sins in which thou hast slept until now, I will come to thee by raising up misfortunes against thee. He speaks in the future because, as has often been said, the wrath of God, in the long-suffering of His goodness, often threatens us from afar and for a long time. But lest, because of its delay, we think ourselves safe from His blows, He says: I will come to thee, certainly and infallibly. Scripture warns us in the same way in Habacuc 2:3: "Wait for him: he shall surely come, and he shall not be slack."

2. I will come to thee... as a thief. Here He compares His visitation and the sending of His evils to the coming of a thief. For: a. A thief is accustomed to arrive suddenly and unexpectedly. b. He comes during sleep. c. He breaks into the house. d. Finally, he pillages and steals everything.

Now such will be the character of the evil which God will raise up against His Church. This evil will be the heretics and tyrants, who will come suddenly and unexpectedly, who will break into the Church during the sleep of bishops, prelates, and pastors, who will gain the upper hand and ravish or pillage bishoprics, prelatures, and ecclesiastical goods, as we see with our own eyes that they did in Germany and in the rest of Europe. There is even danger that they will continue to dominate and to ravish all that remains.

I will come to thee as a thief, by raising against you the barbarous nations and tyrants, who will come like a thief, suddenly and unexpectedly, while you sleep in your old habits of pleasures, impurities, and abominations. They will break in and penetrate even into fortresses and garrisons. They will enter Italy; they will devastate Rome; they will burn the temples and undermine everything, if you do not do penance and if you do not finally awake from the sleep of your sins.

And thou shalt not know at what hour I will come. Jesus Christ here remarks, as if in passing, the blindness with which God is accustomed to strike the princes of the people, so that they can neither foresee nor consequently prevent the evils that threaten them. For He hides from their eyes, weighed down by the sleep of pleasures, the evils and the vengeance that must assail them.

It is therefore in this sense that He says: And thou shalt not know at what hour I will come - that is, the time of His visitation will be hidden from thy eyes, and thou shalt no longer be able to prevent the evil or prepare thyself for battle, because the enemy will come rapidly and will flood everything like the waters of an impetuous river, like an arrow shot into the air, like lightning, like a swift dog.

VERSE 4. But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments. Now follows the customary praise of a small number, in comparison with the multitude of men who are upon the earth. For however afflicted and desolate the Church may be, and however wicked the world may be, the Lord God has always reserved, and always does reserve, saints, His friends, who shine like a light or like a lighthouse in the midst of the world, to prevent everything from being corrupted and everything from being enveloped in darkness.

But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments. By these words He indicates the kind of iniquity with which almost the whole universe is soiled and infected, with few exceptions. He designates this kind of iniquity by its resemblance to stained garments.

Now one soils one's garments: a. By the mud and dung one finds when walking through the streets. b. By the filth of various impurities which one uses for the preservation of life. c. By plague and leprosy. These three metaphors signify the universality of grave sins and iniquities in which almost the whole world is miserably plunged, and in which it languishes with even mortal diseases. Indeed, this generation is altogether perverted, delicate, effeminate, soft, carnal, avaricious, and proud. Hence it is sunk in the mud of pleasures and delights, in heresy and in forgetfulness of God its Creator.

Among such a great quantity of different states, and such a great multitude of men in the world, there are only a small number who make exception, and who still believe with all their heart in the Lord God who is in heaven. Few hope in His providence, serve Jesus Christ according to the state of their vocation, and love God and neighbour.

This is why He says: A few names. The Latin text says nomina - names - that is, so small a number that they can easily be called by their names, as it is said in Scripture: "Those whose names are written in the book of life," because of the small number of those who will be saved. "For many are called, but few are chosen."

And they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. The Apostle here indicates the conduct of Christ on earth, whose example this small number of friends will follow. Christ walked clothed in white: a. For He lived among men in the greatest gentleness, purity, humility, poverty, patience, and abandonment; and all these virtues of Jesus are represented by His white garment. b. He walked clothed in white when, being despised by Herod in His blessed Passion, Herod had Him clothed in a white garment and, having treated Him as a fool, sent Him back to Pilate.

Now it is thus that the small number of the elect who keep themselves immaculate in the midst of the age walk, after the example of Christ on earth, in great humility, contempt, poverty, and meekness, and groan in their heart before the Lord their God. They have much to suffer, and are despised and mocked by the world, because their life and conduct are regarded only as folly.

This is indeed how the world is accustomed to treat the saints of God; this is how it has always judged them, and how it did not blush to judge the only Son of God Himself, who came from heaven for the salvation of men. Therefore Jesus Christ says, to console His friends, John 15:17: "These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember my word that I said to you: the servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

Indeed, friendship with this world is enmity before the Lord, and friendship with God is enmity with the world. Hence the text says: They shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy.

The friendship and esteem of God for His just ones and His friends astonish us, in that He wills and permits them to wander in the world, covered with sheepskins, despised, impoverished, vile, amid tribulations, persecutions, injuries, outrages, temptations, cold, nakedness, and so forth. On the contrary, the world and those who are of the world prosper in delights, live in glory and riches, laugh and rejoice in the abundance of all goods. Now such is the friendship of God for His elect, of whom the world is not worthy.

Hence this passage of Saint Paul to the Hebrews 11:35: "Others were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted; they were put to death by the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy."

This is what the holy Apostles of God knew very well, who returned full of joy from the council, because they had been found worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

VII. VERSE 5. He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments. These words contain the promise of a reward, a recompense, and full consolation in the other life. It is by this promise that He exhorts us, His soldiers, and stimulates us to victory.

He that shall overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; he that shall overcome by escaping from the yoke of the devil, to whom he had formerly been subject by his sins and pleasures, and shall do penance; he that shall overcome by practising charity toward God and neighbour, which blots out the multitude of our sins; he that shall overcome by persevering

in the true Catholic faith amid so many defections, scandals, and afflictions of Christians; he that shall overcome the persecutions, tribulations, anguish, and calamities brought by heretics and bad Christians; he that shall overcome ruses, deceptions, and falsehoods, in prudence and true Christian simplicity; finally, he that shall overcome by persevering in holy doctrine, by holy morals, and by the sincerity of charity - that man shall thus be clothed in white.

That is, he shall be fully recompensed according to the measure of his sufferings. For the more one has been despised in this world, the more glory one shall have in the other; as many tribulations, so many consolations. The more one has been oppressed in humility, poverty, nakedness, thirst, misery, persecutions, tribulations, and adversities of this world, the more one shall be exalted in the other life. One shall abound in heavenly riches; one shall be clothed with the star of immortality, filled with the fullness of all delights, which shall never again be taken away.

It is therefore for the greatest consolation of the afflicted that He adds the particle thus.

And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. The book of life is predestination, or the eternal foreknowledge of God, by which He has certainly and infallibly prepared His kingdom for His elect from all eternity, according to the works of each one. Such, then, is the promise He makes here for the consolation of His friends and the just: And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life - that is, he shall remain inscribed as heir in the testament of the eternal inheritance, which no one shall ever take from him, unto ages of ages.

And I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. The confession of Christ shall be the greatest honour of the saints in heaven. This confession, which is often repeated in the Evangelists, is here promised to those who shall have confessed His holy Name on earth, and who shall have kept it not only by mouth, but also by heart and in deeds.

Now this confession of men for the holy Name of Jesus before the world is altogether foreign to the perverse generation of our age, for almost all confess by mouth that they know Christ, and deny Him by their deeds. But this confession of Christ before His Father is promised here only to His faithful servants, as a special reward, as a stimulus of His soldiers to victory, and as the greatest honour He reserves for them: to be praised and confessed by Him even before His Father, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and in the presence of millions of angels and all the saints of God.

§ 2. On the Sixth Age of the Church, Which Shall Be an Age of Consolation, Beginning with the Holy Pontiff and the Powerful Monarch, and Lasting Until the Appearance of Antichrist. Chapter 3, Verses 7-13

I. VERSE 7. And to the angel of the church of Philadelphia write.

The sixth age of the Church will begin with the powerful Monarch and the holy Pontiff of whom mention has already been made, and will last until the appearance of Antichrist. This age will be an age of consolation (consolativus), in which God will console His holy Church for the affliction and great tribulations which she endured in the fifth age. All nations will be brought back to the unity of the Catholic faith.

The priesthood will flourish more than ever, and men will seek the kingdom of God and His justice with all solicitude. The Lord will give His Church good shepherds. Men will live in peace, each one in his vineyard and in his field. This peace will be granted to them because they will have been reconciled with God Himself. They will live under the shadow of the

wings of the powerful Monarch and of his successors.

We find the type of this age in the sixth epoch of the world, which began with the emancipation of the people of Israel and the restoration of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, and lasted until the coming of Jesus Christ.

For just as, in that epoch, the people of Israel were consoled in the highest degree by the Lord their God through deliverance from captivity; as Jerusalem and its temple were restored; as the kingdoms, nations, and peoples subject to the Roman Empire were conquered and subdued by Caesar Augustus, a very powerful and very distinguished monarch, who governed them for fifty-six years, restored peace to the universe, and reigned alone until the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and even after; so also, in the sixth age, God will gladden His Church by the greatest prosperity.

For although in the fifth age we see everywhere the most deplorable calamities - while all is devastated by war; while Catholics are oppressed by heretics and bad Christians; while the Church and her ministers are made tributary; while principalities are overthrown; while monarchs are killed, subjects rejected, and all men conspire to erect republics - nevertheless an astonishing change will be wrought by the hand of Almighty God, such as no one can humanly imagine.

For that powerful Monarch, who will come as one sent by God, will destroy the republics from their foundations; he will subject all things to his power (sibi subjugabit omnia) and will use his zeal for the true Church of Christ. All heresies will be relegated to hell. The empire of the Turks will be broken, and this Monarch will reign in the East and in the West. All nations will come and adore the Lord their God in the true Catholic and Roman faith. Many saints and doctors will flourish upon the earth.

Men will love judgment and justice. Peace will reign throughout the whole universe, because the divine power will bind Satan for many years, until the son of perdition comes, who will loose him again.

It is also to this sixth age, because of the likeness of its perfection, that the sixth day of creation corresponds: when God made man in His likeness and subjected to him all the creatures of the world, so that he might be their lord and master.

Now it is in this way that this Monarch will rule over all the beasts of the earth - that is, over barbarous nations, rebellious peoples, heretical republics, and all men dominated by their evil passions.

To this sixth age also belongs the sixth Spirit of the Lord: namely, the spirit of wisdom, which God will then pour out abundantly over the whole surface of the globe.

For men will fear the Lord their God; they will observe His law and serve Him with all their heart. The sciences will be multiplied and perfected upon the earth. Sacred Scripture will be understood unanimously, without controversy and without the error of heresies. Men will be enlightened both in the natural sciences and in the heavenly sciences.

Finally, the Church of Philadelphia is the type of this sixth age. For Philadelphia means "love of the brother" (amor fratris salutans), and also "preserving the inheritance in union with the Lord" (hereditatem salvans adhaerente Domino). Now all these characteristics perfectly suit this sixth age, in which there will be love, concord, and perfect peace, and in which the powerful Monarch will be able to regard almost the whole world as his inheritance.

He will deliver the earth, with the help of the Lord his God, from all its enemies, from ruins, and from every evil.

II. These things saith the Holy One and the True One, he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth.

As he is accustomed to do in the description of each age, Saint John again designates here, by these first words, certain insignia of Our Lord Jesus Christ - insignia which He bears not only in Himself, but which He also causes to shine outwardly in His members and in His body, which is the Church, in a particular manner in the sixth age.

These things saith the Holy One - the Saint of saints, and true God and man. It is because of these infinite insignia, which are holiness and truth, and which belong to Our Lord Jesus Christ by the divine hypostasis, that every knee must bow before Him, in heaven, on earth, and in hell.

He is also called here Holy and True as Head of His members and of His body, which is the Church; and also because His Church will be especially holy and true in the sixth age. She will be holy because men will then walk with all their heart in the ways of the Lord, and will seek the kingdom of God with all solicitude. The Church will be true because, after all sects have been relegated to hell, she will be recognised as true over the whole surface of the earth.

He that hath the key of David. By these words is understood the royal and universal power which Christ possesses over His Church, a power which He will preserve until the consummation of the age, in execution of the will and counsels of God the Father. Matthew 28:18: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."

Moreover, it is said here that Christ has the key of David because David and his kingdom were the figure of Jesus Christ and of His kingdom, as is seen in the books of the prophets.

He that openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth. These words express the power of this key of Christ. It is an unlimited power, founded upon His power alone, able to distribute goods and evils according to His will. Therefore it is said: He opens the door to goods by spreading them abroad, and He opens the door to evils by permitting them.

And no man shutteth - that is, no one can prevent the decrees of His divine will from being accomplished in heaven, on earth, and in hell. The wicked cannot prevent good, and the good cannot prevent evils. For it is said of the wicked in Matthew 16:18: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And of the just in Ezekiel 14:14: "And if these three men, Noe, Daniel, and Job, shall be in the midst of this land" - that is, of a nation which has sinned against the Lord - "they shall deliver their own souls by their justice, saith the Lord of hosts."

He shutteth, and no man openeth - that is, on the other hand, He makes the evils of His Church disappear in their time, and restores goods to her. Then He permits chastisements anew, and there is no one who can remove them from His hand or prevent them, according as it is written in Psalm 103:28-30: "When thou shalt give it them, they shall gather it up: when thou shalt open thy hand, they shall all be filled with good. But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled; thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

I know thy works. These words are a general praise of the works of the sixth age, just as above they expressed blame concerning the works of the fifth. I know thy works - which are all holy, good, perfect, and full of charity, as the sequel will show.

VERSE 8. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

These words are full of consolation. They describe the future happiness of the sixth age, a happiness which will consist in three things.

1. In the true, clear, and unanimous interpretation of Sacred Scripture. For then the darkness of errors and the false doctrines of heretics, which are nothing other than the doctrines of demons, will be dissipated and will disappear. The faithful of Christ, spread over the whole surface of the globe, will be attached to the Church in heart and mind, in the unity of faith and in the observance of good morals. This is why it is said: I have given before thee a door opened - that is, a clear and deep understanding of Sacred Scripture. Which no man can shut - meaning that no heretic will any longer be able to pervert the sense of the word of God; because in this sixth age there will be an ecumenical council, the greatest that has ever taken place, in which, by a special favour of God, by the power of the announced Monarch, by the authority of the holy Pontiff, and by the unity of the most pious princes, all heresies and atheism will be proscribed and banished from the earth. There the legitimate sense of Sacred Scripture will be declared, and it will be believed and admitted by all the world, because God will have opened the door of His grace.

2. This happiness will consist in an immense number of faithful. For in that time all peoples and nations will flow toward one sheepfold, and will enter through the one door of the true faith. Thus will be fulfilled the prophecy of John 10:16: "There shall be one fold and one shepherd." And also that other prophecy of Matthew 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations; and then shall the consummation come." Now it is also in this sense that it is said here: I have given before thee a door opened - the door of faith and of the salvation of souls, a door which had been closed to an innumerable multitude of men in the fifth age, because of heresies and the abominations of sinners. It was for this reason that the sheepfold was then restricted, degraded, humbled, and despised in the highest degree. But now the door is opened before thee; it is open to all, like the great portal of a royal palace when there are neither enemies nor sedition to fear.

3. This happiness will consist in the multitude of the predestined. Indeed, a great number of the faithful will be saved in that time, because the true faith will shine with splendour, and justice will abound. I have given before thee a door opened - the door of heaven, which no one can shut until the appointed time. The Latin text begins with the particle ecce, behold, because, as has been said elsewhere, this word excites our mind to conceive something great and admirable in this work which God will accomplish for our consolation, for our happiness, and for our spiritual joy.

Because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word. This passage indicates three causes, or three particular merits, for which God will have pity on His Church and open the door of His mercy in this sixth age.

The first merit is placed in the present: Because thou hast a little strength. These words express the industry of the servants of God who will prudently and zealously use the little strength they have received from Him, and will thus obtain very great fruits by the conversion of sinners and heretics. And it is this great effort which they will have made, especially at the beginning of the sixth age, to bring about these conversions, that Jesus Christ will reward with great prosperity.

The second and third merits are placed in the past: Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my faith. By this He designates the constancy and perseverance of His servants in His love and in His faith. For, toward the end of the fifth age, these servants, though having little strength, will nevertheless rise up against the sinners who denied the faith because of earthly goods.

They will also rise up against certain priests who, seduced by the beauty and attractions of women, will wish to abandon celibacy. Now, at a time when the devil will enjoy an almost absolute and universal liberty, and when the greatest tribulation will rage upon the earth, these faithful servants, united among themselves by the strongest bonds, will protect celibacy by keeping themselves pure in the midst of the age.

They will appear vile in the eyes of men, and will see themselves despised and rejected by the world, which will turn them into ridicule. But the Saviour Jesus Christ, in His goodness, will regard with a favourable eye their patience, their industry, their constancy, and their perseverance; and He will reward them in the sixth age by seconding and favouring their efforts in the conversion of sinners and heretics.

Because thou hast a little strength - because thou art unknown and without power, without riches and without glory; and because the grace of God has been given and distributed to thee only in measure; nevertheless, thou hast made the greatest efforts in thy zeal and burning charity for the holy Name of Jesus, for His Church, and for the salvation of souls. This is why Christ, in His mercy, will finally come to thy help and open the door of the true faith and of penance to heretics and sinners.

And hast kept my word. The word of Christ is taken here for the special doctrine and knowledge of a precept or counsel which was not contained in the old law, and which was altogether contrary to the world. Now the Gospel contains three words of this kind. The first is the precept of the love of enemies and of fraternal charity. Matthew 5. The second is the counsel of continence and celibacy. Matthew 19:12: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven." The third word is the patience which we must practise. Matthew 5:39-40: "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." Now it is said in the text: And hast kept my word - that is, the word of fraternal charity, of celibacy, of patience, and of meekness; the word which God pronounced from His blessed mouth, and which He Himself observed.

And hast not denied my name. The Latin text says: Thou hast not denied my faith. Now faith is most often denied because of riches, honours, and pleasures. But the servants of Christ will despise these three concupiscences toward the end of the fifth age, and they will lead a humble life, without seeking dignities or power. They will be despised and ignored by the great, and they will rejoice in it. They will sacrifice their revenues for the poor, and for the building up and propagation of the Catholic Church, which they will love as their mother.

They will walk in the simplicity of their heart in the presence of God and men; and it is for this reason that their hidden life will be considered folly. The wisdom of this world consists in keeping what one possesses and increasing it. These true faithful, on the contrary, will despise earthly goods and honours, and will preserve themselves from defilements with women. Their conversation will be in conformity with the holiness of their vocation.

Therefore, when they see their fellow-men apostatise and deny the faith of Jesus Christ because of riches, honours, and pleasures, they will groan in their heart before their God, and they will persevere in the true principles of the Catholic faith. It is therefore with reason that Jesus Christ addresses to them this praise: And thou hast not denied my faith.

III. VERSE 9. Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know that I have loved thee.

Now follows the promise of a very abundant grace of God, who is accustomed to assist and crown with success the pious efforts of His servants, and to reward their fidelity, constancy,

and perseverance in the good they undertake.

The Latin text cited above contains the particle ecce, behold, three times: 1. Ecce dedi coram te ostium apertum - Behold, I have opened before thee a door. 2. Ecce dabo - Behold, I will give. 3. Ecce faciam - Behold, I will make. This is to elevate our mind and make us conceive how great and admirable are the works of divine mercy, which is about to manifest the riches of His glory, His grace, and His infinite goodness.

First, Ecce, behold. He addresses Himself first to His servants and says to them: Behold the fruits of thy labour and of thy works. Second, Ecce dabo, I will give thee what thou hast so long called for by thy tears and pious groanings. Third, Ecce, behold. Behold, I am going to do what no one believed. Console thyself now, therefore; for I will bring of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.

Now in the synagogue of Satan are the Jews and those who err in the faith by admitting the false doctrine of the devil, the father of lies. Likewise, by the Jews are also understood, figuratively and allegorically, heretics and schismatics who say they are Christians, but are not, and are liars. Jesus Christ therefore promises here the conversion of heretics, schismatics, and all those who err in the faith. And this conversion will take place in the sixth age, when the Greek Church will be reunited to the Latin Church.

Behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. These words express the strength, efficacy, and abundance of the grace and goodness of God, who will cause entire nations, and even all peoples, to come to adore Him by submitting themselves to the Catholic Church, which will become their mother. And I will make, by the light of My grace, that they come spontaneously and no longer forced by war and by the sword.

I will make them to adore before thy feet - that is, to humble themselves and submit to thy spiritual power. From what has just been said, one sees what faith and what confidence all prelates and shepherds of souls must have in the grace of God, without which everything totters and nothing is accomplished.

For nearly a hundred years now men have fought against heretics, not only by strong and heated discussions and by the most learned writings, but also by force of arms; every means has been tried, and yet no success has been obtained. Therefore there remains nothing else for us to do but to have recourse to the Lord our God, to humble ourselves, to lead a holy life, and to labour ardently to preserve the remnants of Catholicism until it pleases Jesus Christ finally to have pity on His Church - which He cannot forget - and to have regard for the efforts of His servants, who continue to fear and serve Him.

Let us therefore place our hope and a lively confidence in the all-powerful grace of Jesus Christ, who can enlighten the blinded minds of miserable sinners and heretics by a single ray of His light. It is this confidence that the Psalmist recommends to us in Psalm 30, from verse 3 to verse 7.

And they shall know that I have loved thee - that is, they shall confess that thou art My only chosen and beloved spouse, the true Church and heiress of the heavenly kingdom, outside of which there is no salvation. For in the sixth age the Catholic Church will be raised to the summit of her temporal glory, and she will be exalted from sea to sea. There will then be no more controversies or questions among men to know which is the true Church.

This is why it is said: They shall know - that is, what in our fifth age is so disputed and debated will be brought into full daylight in the sixth. It is thus that divine goodness knows how to draw good from evil by permitting heresies and tribulations, so that His holy Name may be better known. We have an example of this in all the errors which appeared at different epochs, and which, however dreadful they were, disappeared again by the power of

divine truth.

We will cite only the error of Arius against the divinity of Jesus Christ. Was there ever one like it for obstinacy? Now the modern heresy may certainly be compared to it.

VERSE 10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

The hour of temptation which is to come, and which is here predicted, is the time of the persecution of Antichrist, which Our Lord prophesied in Matthew 24 and in Daniel 11 and 12. He calls it the hour of temptation because it will last only a little while, and because the seventh age of the Church will be short, as we shall see later.

Divine goodness is accustomed to preserve His elect from the hour of temptation and from times of calamity by two means: 1. By calling them to Himself in peace, through natural death, before evils and tribulations surprise them. He granted this grace to Ezechias, to Josias, and to other saints of the Old and New Testament. 2. He also preserves His own, not by taking them from this world, but by delivering them from evil. John 17:15: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." It was in this way that Jesus Christ sent His Apostles and His disciples into the midst of wolves.

Now it is by these two means that God will preserve His Church, in the sixth age, from the hour of the temptation of Antichrist. First, by calling her to Himself; because, at the end of the sixth age, charity will grow cold, sins will begin to multiply, and a perverse generation and unfaithful children will gradually arise. The just, the saints, the good prelates, and the good shepherds will then be taken away in great number by a natural death; and in their place will come lukewarm and carnal men, who will care only for themselves and who will be like trees without fruit, wandering stars, and clouds without water.

Second, Jesus Christ will preserve His Church from evil without taking her from this world. For the Church will last until the consummation of the ages; and there will remain in her, in comparison with so great a multitude of the wicked, only a few saints and doctors, whom God will send into the midst of wolves to teach truth and justice to many. These will fall by the sword, in flames, in chains, and in ruin. Daniel 11. God will thus preserve these last elect from the hour of temptation by delivering them from evil - that is, by preventing them from consenting to the impiety of the furious tyrant, and by helping them to die for truth, for justice, and for the faith of Jesus Christ.

VERSE 11. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

These words contain a salutary warning of the sudden and unexpected arrival of Jesus Christ, together with an exhortation for the faithful to continue in the good way. These are, as it were, two shields of the first necessity, which He presents to us at once against the last tribulation described in Matthew 24.

First, at that time men will think that the reign of Antichrist will be of excessive duration because of the great happiness and power of that tyrant. The Jews and the other unbelievers who will receive him as the Messias will believe his reign to be eternal. Now it is in order to overthrow this presumption and destroy this falsehood that He says here: Behold, I come quickly.

Second, just as in the time of the horrible persecution of Diocletian - which was the living prototype of Antichrist - several faithful denied the faith of Jesus Christ and sacrificed to idols, among whom was even the holy Pope Marcellinus, who afterward did penance and

courageously suffered martyrdom; and just as, among the forty martyrs of the time of Emperor Licinius, there was one who fell away, whose crown was afterward given to Janitor; so also will it happen in the persecution of the end times, and worse still, for that persecution will surpass all those which preceded it. That is why Jesus Christ, like a general-in-chief, takes care to warn His soldiers in advance, arming them with the shield that is supremely necessary: strength, constancy, and perseverance.

VERSE 12. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.

To give more strength to His beloved soldiers, and to confirm them further in the last and most terrible persecution, Our Lord Jesus Christ causes the promise of the greatest goods to follow in the text, as a reward proportioned to the difficult victories which the just will have won over the tyrant.

The first of these victories will be firmness and constancy, by which they will be like pillars of perseverance in the Church of Christ. They will resist the fury of the tyrant, his false miracles, and his diabolical inventions; and they will sacrifice their body, their blood, and their life for truth and justice.

The second victory will be the confession of the true God, who created heaven and earth and all that they contain. It is against this confession that Antichrist will especially rage, and he will set himself up as the god of gods.

The third victory will be the firm faith and fidelity of the Church of Christ, which Antichrist will reject as an imposture, and which in his fury he will scatter to the four winds of heaven, upon arid mountains and in caves.

The fourth, finally, will be the confession of the Name of Jesus Christ, against which the tyrant will rise up. He will glory in his false miracles, which he will perform by means of diabolical artifices. He will call himself the Messias, and he will be received as such by the Jews, according to the words of Jesus Christ Himself in John 5:43: "I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."

To these four virtues, merits, and distinguished victories of the just, God promises, in proportion, four kinds of rewards and glories.

The first is contained in these words: I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more. Columns are placed in the palaces of kings to support the mass of the building, to be its glory and ornament, and to heighten its splendour. Now it is thus that the just of God who, in the temple of Christ - that is, in the Church militant - will have been, by the firmness of their faith, columns of the truth and justice of Jesus Christ, defending them, preaching them, fighting and dying for them; it is thus, we say again, that in the temple of God and in the Church triumphant, the just will also be eternal columns, shining with glory in the presence of all the saints and all the angels of heaven.

Then, as these just ones will have faithfully and constantly remained in the temple of God on earth - that is, in the Catholic Church - without ever leaving it to go into the sects of Antichrist and of other heretics, abandoning the true faith; so also will they remain in the eternal temple of God, never again to go out. They will be immortal, impeccable, stable, and immutable for eternity. They will have no more pains to suffer and will shed no more tears.

Finally, death, hunger, thirst, and all the other miseries of body and soul will no longer have power over them.

The second reward is found in these words: And I will write upon him the name of my God. For they will be like Him, according to Saint John; and they will even be called gods, as is seen in Psalm 81:6: "I have said: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the most High."

The third reward is expressed thus: And I will write upon him... the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God. That is, the just will be the temple of God, in which the King of kings and Lord of lords will deign to dwell; and they will possess Him throughout eternity by the beatific vision.

The fourth reward, finally, is found in these words: And I will write upon him... my new name. This means that He will honour the just with His Name; for they will be called the sons of God, according to Saint John 3:1.

VERSE 13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. The same explanation as above.

§ 3. On the Seventh and Last Age of the Church, Which Shall Be the Age of Desolation, Beginning with the Appearance of Antichrist and Lasting Until the End of the World. Chapter 3, Verses 14-22

I. VERSE 14. And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God.

The seventh and last age of the Church will begin with the appearance of Antichrist, and will last until the end of the world. It will be an age of desolation, in which there will be a total defection from the faith. Luke 18:8: "But yet the Son of man, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?"

It is in this age that the abomination of desolation described in Saint Matthew 24 and in Daniel 11 and 12 will be accomplished. It is then also that the age will be brought to an end, and that the word of the divine will shall be fulfilled.

To this age belongs the seventh day of the creation of the world, when God, after having finished His work, rested on the seventh day. Genesis 2. Now it is in this way that, in the seventh age of the Church, God will finish His spiritual work, which He had decreed to accomplish through His Son Jesus Christ. And afterward He will rest with His saints throughout all eternity.

This age is also figured by the seventh Spirit of the Lord: the Spirit of knowledge. For in that time it will be clearly known, after Antichrist has been destroyed and cast into hell, that Jesus Christ came upon the earth as man. And then those among the Jews who remain will do penance. This age is again figured by the seventh Spirit of the Lord because then knowledge will be multiplied upon the earth, according to Daniel 12:4. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and every eye shall see Him.

Moreover, this seventh age is represented by the seventh epoch of the world. For just as that epoch will be the last which brings the age to its end, so also the seventh age will be the last age of the Church.

Finally, the type of this age is the Church of Laodicea, which is explained by "vomiting." Now this word suits the last age, during which, while waiting for Antichrist to come into power, charity will grow cold, faith will be lost, all kingdoms will be in trouble and agitation and will

be divided among themselves; and there will arise a race of selfish, careless, and lukewarm men.

Pastors, prelates, and princes will be deceivers, like trees of autumn, without leaves and without the fruits of good works. They will be like wandering stars and clouds without water. And then Christ will begin to vomit the Church out of His mouth; and He will permit Satan to be loosed and to extend his power everywhere, and the son of perdition to enter into the kingdom, which is the Church.

II. These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God. The first words of this text contain new attributes or insignia of Jesus Christ.

These things saith the Amen. The Latin text expresses these last words by the word Amen. Amen is a Hebrew word, which means "true." This word suits Christ perfectly because of the divinity which He has of Himself, and which is His essence, because He is the first Truth. Therefore Saint John says in John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." This attribute cannot belong to any ordinary man, because every man is a liar, and God alone is true.

The faithful and true witness of the glory and majesty of the Father, to whom He bore witness, being His own Son, and remaining faithful to Him unto death, even the death of the Cross.

Who is the beginning of the creation of God, because, according to Saint John 1:3, "All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made."

The Apostle begins first by expressing these divine attributes and insignia in order to confirm the minds of His servants in the truth of the Gospel against the impiety of Antichrist, who, glorifying himself as the Lord God of heaven and earth, will blaspheme horribly, saying that Jesus Christ is not God, that He did not become flesh, and that neither His testimony nor His Gospel is true, and so forth.

VERSE 15. I know thy works. By these words, which the Apostle is accustomed to use, He reproaches the works of this age, as is clearly seen from what follows.

Thou art neither cold nor hot - that is, thou hast neither the fear of God nor the fervour of charity, by which thou wouldst put justice and truth into practice. Cold and heat are metaphors which distinguish these two virtues. For, in fact, in the last days iniquity will abound, and the charity of many will grow cold. Saint Matthew 24:12. Therefore Jesus Christ rightly reproaches this age of the Church for being neither cold nor hot.

I would thou wert cold or hot. These words contain a kind of wish, by which Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His fatherly affection, deplores the sad state of His Church, as a father or mother is accustomed to weep over the death of a son or daughter, and as a bridegroom weeps over the bride whom he loved.

VERSE 16. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.

Because thou art lukewarm - that is, because thou languishest, and because thou losest faith, hope, and charity, and consequently no longer observest My commandments by doing works of justice - I will vomit thee out of my mouth.

A man is accustomed to reject from his mouth what seems to him bad and disagreeable, as, for example, lukewarm water, which represents, by a true metaphor, the faithful person languishing in faith, hope, and charity, and who is Christian only in name. It is for this reason, therefore, that He says: I will vomit thee out of my mouth.

The Latin text says: Incipiam - "I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth"; that is, I will begin little by little to reject thee far from Me, to leave thee, to abandon thee, and to permit thee to fall into heresies.

I will vomit thee out of my mouth - that is, I will permit the nations and Antichrist to trample thee underfoot, as one is accustomed to trample underfoot saliva and lukewarm water that has been thrown to the ground. The Christian people are in the mouth of Christ by faith in His word and in His Gospel; and Jesus Christ vomits them out because of the madness of their abominations, by permitting them to fall into error and to abandon justice.

This is what Jesus Christ will begin to do toward the end of the sixth age; and this is what He will continue in the seventh, when charity grows cold, when iniquity abounds, and when almost all men will totally lose the faith.

VERSE 17. Because thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. VERSE 18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

Jesus Christ here reveals, under the form of paternal correction, the vices and defects of this age, against which He also gives salutary counsel and an opportune remedy.

The first of these vices will be a guilty presumption of mind, founded upon self-knowledge, which will so blind men that they will no longer even recognise their sins or their errors. They will harden themselves in their vices, their pleasures, and falsehood to such a point that they will justify themselves and misunderstand sound doctrine.

This is what Jesus Christ expresses by these words: Thou sayest, with false boasting and vain presumption, I am rich - that is, I am endowed with justice, truth, and the most perfect and beautiful sciences. I am wealthy by the knowledge and practice of all the arts. My experience surpasses that of all ages. And I have need of nothing. I do not need to be instructed by others.

This is also the satanic spirit by which pseudo-politicians and false Christians of our age are animated: despising every true science and every sound doctrine, and no longer listening to the directors of souls, they justify themselves in all things and follow only the impulses of their self-love and their perverted will. Thus they run to their own ruin.

From this follows: And thou knowest not - that is, thou dost not recognise that thou art wretched. For thou art indeed wretched because of thy blindness, thy lack of grace and true light, and consequently also wretched because of enmity with God - an enmity which is the greatest of all misfortunes.

But thy misery is all the greater because thou dost not know, or dost not wish to recognise, the evil, nor to use the remedy which I or others propose to thee. Thou art miserable because of the punishment which will follow. Moreover, thou art poor in spiritual merits, merits which cannot subsist in the state of enmity in which thou findest thyself with God. Thou art blind because thou dost not see and dost not recognise thy defects, thy vices, thy poverty, and thy misery. And thou art naked and stripped of the virtues of true faith, hope, charity, justice, and religion; for virtues are like the garment of the soul.

The second vice of this age will be vain confidence in riches, treasures, precious objects, rich ornaments, the magnificence of buildings and churches, and the external splendour of spiritual and temporal things. And because all these advantages will not be united to charity toward God, they will not please Jesus Christ. For the sacrifices of the Old Testament were

not accepted by God without mercy.

All these goods will become the prey of Antichrist, who will enjoy the treasures of churches, kings, princes, and great men. He will trample underfoot all that is holy and sacred; he will deliver to the flames and utterly ruin the most magnificent churches. Then there will be the greatest desolation and abomination that has ever been; for everything sacred will be consumed by fire and reduced to ashes.

It is against such misfortunes that Jesus Christ here gives salutary counsel and a precious warning: I counsel thee, thee already in agony and struggling against death, to buy of me, in place of all these treasures, gold fire-tried in the fire of charity and heavenly wisdom, by works of mercy, alms, and pious foundations.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, which the tyrant will not be able to take away from thee, and which no one will be able to corrupt. This is what Saint Lawrence and other holy martyrs did: at the approach of death and in the hour of temptation, they distributed the treasures of the Church to the poor, and bought the tested gold of charity, whose burning flame helped them to endure the flames and all the other torments of tyrants.

This is what the saints of God will have to do, especially in those last times of calamities, after which there will be no more time, and there will be no more need of gold, silver, precious vessels, or treasures.

It is thus that Our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us paternally: that thou mayest be made rich - that is, that we may be enriched with heavenly treasures which no one can, and no one will be able to, take away from us in eternity, if we make of ourselves the sacrifice of these perishable and short-lived goods.

I counsel thee to buy of me… white garments, that thou mayest be clothed - that is, the garments of virtues and of the advantages which God will give thee in reward for thy charity and thy works of mercy. Buy this gold, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear. Cover with it thy sins, which are like the nakedness of the soul; for charity obtains for us the pardon of the multitude of our sins.

And anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Eye-salve is a remedy for the eyes. The eyes of the soul are memory and intellect. Now these eyes of the soul are often darkened and blinded by the attraction of earthly goods. The remedy which God here proposes as a spiritual medicine against these two diseases of the eyes, in order to preserve us from spiritual blindness, consists especially in the consideration of the last things, and in meditation on the Holy Scriptures.

These remedies will be especially necessary in these last times for the soldiers of Jesus Christ, because of the horror of the torments, and because of the errors and deceptions of the false prophets, and also because of the scandals and the total loss of faith.

It is therefore for our greatest good that Jesus Christ warns us, saying: Anoint thy eyes with eye-salve - that is, apply the eyes of thy soul to meditation on thy last things; search the Holy Scriptures, in order better to distinguish the vanity of present goods from the solidity of the goods to come. Seek also to distinguish the truth from the iniquity of the tyrant, who will seek to seduce thee by false promises, by flatteries, by false prodigies, and by false miracles.

VERSE 19. Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance. Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. That is to say: as a father warns his beloved children, I rebuke thee, I warn thee, and I inform thee of the defects from which thou must correct thyself, and of the dangers which thou must avoid.

And I chastise such as I love, by permitting adversities, tribulations, and persecutions against them in this life; and I subject them to the power of the impious, according to the Psalmist, Psalm 65:12: "Thou hast set men over our heads. We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment."

III. Be zealous therefore, and do penance. These words contain two orders to be followed, which Jesus Christ gives to the faithful who will live in this last trial: good example and penance.

Be zealous therefore. Imitate My courageous and prudent soldiers, who underwent similar persecutions under Diocletian and the other tyrants.

And do penance for thy sins. Rise promptly from thy fall, as Pope Marcellinus did, who, after having sacrificed to the gods through fear of torments and death, nevertheless did penance.

VERSE 20. Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

These words announce to us the arrival and the supper of the Lamb, to which He invites us, saying: Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. Jesus Christ will be at the gate of His Church when He comes for judgment at the end of the world. And He will knock when men see accomplished the signs and the great tribulation which He foretold in Saint Matthew 24:32, where He adds, in the parable of the fig tree: "Know ye that when you shall see all these things, the Son of man is near, even at the doors."

If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door. At that time two voices will be heard: one true and holy, which will be the voice of Jesus Christ; and the other false and impious, which will be the voice of Antichrist and his followers, for they will say that Antichrist is the Messias.

It is against this latter voice that Jesus Christ puts us on our guard when He says in Saint Matthew 24:23: "Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him."

The other voice is the voice of Jesus Christ, who says in Holy Scripture that He is truly the Messias and the Son of God. This voice will be heard by the mouth of Enoch and Elias, and of the other servants of God, who will then resist Antichrist and will preach that Jesus Christ is the true Messias, that He is God and man, and that He became flesh, and so forth.

It is therefore with reason that Jesus Christ says to us here: If any man shall hear my voice and open the door of his heart to me, by believing in Me, I will come in to him by the grace of My consolation, amid all torments and all adversities.

And I will sup with him, and he with me. The bodily supper is the refreshment which man takes before sleep, just as the holy supper is the refreshment of the soul before death. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ says: I will sup with him - that is, I will restore him; I will strengthen him at death by the grace of perseverance. And he with me - that is, he will resist torments unto death, in order afterward to obtain the crown of immortality.

VERSE 21. To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

These words promise to the soldiers of Jesus Christ, who will have been victorious in the last agony of this age, the power and honour of judging the living and the dead, as Jesus Christ also promised to His Apostles in Saint Matthew 19:28: "Amen, I say to you, that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Now it is in this way that Jesus Christ promises to His servants of the last age a distinguished honour in heaven, which will be judicial power, and the glory of being seated upon a throne, in reward for the difficult victory which they will have won in the greatest of persecutions.

VERSE 22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. The same explanation as above.

CHAPTER 4

On the Hierarchical Nature of the Church Militant

Revelation 4:1–11

Book Two: On Chapters Four and Five

On the Nature of the Church, Which Is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ; and on the Book of the Secrets of God, Concerning the Revelations Made to Saint John

VERSE 1. After these things I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, as it were of a trumpet speaking with me, said: Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must be done hereafter.

§ 1. Preliminary Observations Necessary for Understanding the Following Two Chapters, and Others Also

I. Before continuing this interpretation of the Apocalypse, one must know:

1. That heaven sometimes signifies the Church militant, and at other times the Church triumphant; in certain cases also it signifies both indistinctly. This may be distinguished by the matter of the object being treated.

2. The Church militant on earth is an image or figure of the Church triumphant in heaven. From this it follows that Saint John describes the one by the other; and thus he also depicts the militant kingdom of Christ on earth by His triumphant kingdom in heaven. For example, he says that this militant kingdom was shown to him in heaven by a throne; and the one seated upon this throne was shown to him by four living creatures and twenty-four ancients, who were seated and prostrated themselves in the presence of the throne, adoring Him who lives for ever and ever. Now all these things also exist and are done, each in its own manner, in the militant kingdom of Christ on earth.

3. Just as the universality of the churches, seals, angels, trumpets, plagues, spirits, and so forth, represent the goods and evils which happen at various epochs in the militant kingdom of Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of the divine will, and just as they are counted under the number seven; so also the four living creatures represent the universality of doctors, preachers, and primates; while the twenty-four ancients designate the universality of bishops, archbishops, and other prelates. Finally, the twenty-four seats figure the universality of episcopal and archiepiscopal sees, upon which all pontiffs have been and will be seated and established over the whole surface of the globe until the consummation of the ages, under the authority of one visible head, himself seated upon a throne, which is the chair of Saint Peter.

4. Although several gospels appeared, there are nevertheless only four which have been and are admitted by the Church; and these four gospels are figured by the four living creatures in Ezekiel 1 and Apocalypse 4. Moreover, the evangelists are compared to four smiths in Zacharias 1; likewise to four chariots in Zacharias 6; then to four tables in Ezekiel 40. Finally, these four evangelists were figured by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abiu in Exodus 24, whom

God commanded, together with the seventy elders, to come up the mountain.

The reason for the choice of this number four in the Gospels is taken from the four parts of the world, where they were to be preached. The four evangelists have transmitted to us, in a unanimous sense, the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, to which the whole Church must conform, and to which she has always conformed in faith and preaching. From this one may conclude that these four evangelists, although they are already in the Church triumphant in heaven, nevertheless continue to exist morally and by their authority as doctors of the first order, as archchancellors, and as princes of the ancients in the Church militant.

5. After the model of the heavenly kingdom, Our Lord Jesus Christ constituted His earthly kingdom as a perfect monarchy, with the most admirable and wisest hierarchy possible. He first established one single head; then the four evangelists; then the apostles; then the doctors, and so forth. It was according to this first model that He also constituted the Sovereign Pontiff as the universal head of the Church militant, and that He then established patriarchs and primates, then archbishops, bishops, prelates, deans, parish priests, and so forth, in the order of subordination.

6. The literal sense of Scripture is not always the sense expressed immediately by the words. Often it is the sense designated by the images, and this sense may be distinguished by the property of the objects or words from which it must be extracted. Thus, for example, it is said in Judges 9:8: "The trees went to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree: Reign thou over us." The literal sense must not be understood of trees, but of the men of Sichem, represented by the trees, who chose Abimelech as their king.

7. Although the visions of Saint John and the revelations of the secrets of God were made to him with the distinction of past, present, and future times, they are nevertheless represented as present to the mind and as though they were to last only a single day - that is, the day on which they were revealed by God. This is why the prophet uses expressions which represent them as existing or still enduring. The same observation must also be applied to the persons and things of which the text may speak.

8. Men and spirits, whether good or evil, according as they are sent or permitted by God, are all called indifferently angels in the Apocalypse.

9. One must not always observe the order according to which a thing is done; one must also consider the order of the vision and of the description. For it frequently happens that things which must be fulfilled earlier are revealed or represented later to the prophets; and by that very fact they are written in the same order in which they were revealed, as examples of this are also seen in the Old and New Testament.

10. In this book of the Apocalypse, by the word throne one understands indifferently every kind of seat: for example, secular, spiritual, temporal, or eternal power. Thus, in the course of the descriptions, the throne is sometimes taken for a temporal seat; at other times for the pontifical seat of the Church militant on earth; and at other times, finally, for the seat of the divine Majesty in the Church triumphant in heaven.

11. In a single description of one mystery, several other mysteries to come at different times are sometimes included. From this it follows that one single thing, or the same words, may have several literal senses, some of equal and others of lesser importance. This proceeds from the essentially one and indivisible knowledge of God, which comprehends all things in the most perfect manner.

And it is thus that God revealed and showed to Saint John, in this book of the Apocalypse, how he was to understand, under one and the same figure, various persons or various things which, although they were to exist at different epochs, were nevertheless to operate the

same things, or things similar among themselves, either for or against the Church.

And it is also thus that a person or a thing which has its own proper signification in itself or by itself could at the same time be the figure of another person or another thing. We have an example of this in Daniel and in other prophets, who foretold many circumstances of the synagogue, which circumstances had to be understood literally of the Church of Jesus Christ.

§ 2. On the Nature of the Church of Jesus Christ, as It Was Revealed and Manifested to Saint John. Chapter 4, Verses 1-11

I. After Saint John, enlightened by a divine revelation, had described in general the seven ages of the Church from her origin until the consummation of the ages, and after he had given, for each of these ages, a sufficient and even necessary instruction, God introduced him, as it were, into the sanctuary of the house and kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is the Church. And in this fourth chapter He showed him the nature, government, and interior constitution of this Church. Afterward He revealed to him in particular His admirable secrets and His eternal counsels, in the same way that a king, introducing a favourite into his palace, would open to him the secret door of the cabinet where the treasures and particular secrets of his kingdom are carefully preserved.

VERSE 1. After these things I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven. Here heaven is taken for the kingdom and militant Church of Jesus Christ, whose door is opened to Saint John; that is to say, the secret of the divine will concerning this Church is shown and manifested to him.

And the first voice which I had heard, as it were of a trumpet speaking with me, said. These words show the gravity of the one who invites Saint John to enter and receive the secrets of God. It is the archangel Saint Michael who speaks from the height of heaven, and who is about to reveal important mysteries concerning the Church militant, whose care has been entrusted to him.

He says: Come up hither, in spirit, and I will show thee the things which must be done hereafter. The Archangel tells Saint John to come up - that is, to raise himself to the height of the marvellous things which he promises to manifest to him, and which must be fulfilled on earth before the end of time.

VERSE 2. And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold there was a throne set in heaven. This throne is the apostolic and monarchical seat; it is also ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction. Jesus Christ placed this throne in heaven - that is, in His Church - when He instituted His kingdom upon the earth. Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church," etc. "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," etc. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

And upon the throne, one sitting.

1. He whom Saint John says was seated upon the throne is the visible head who governs the Church of God upon earth. The first who was seated upon this throne was Saint Peter, who had successors without interruption until this day, and who will have them likewise until the end of the world, because the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.

2. He who is seated upon the throne is also the invisible Head of the Church militant, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who exercises His empire over His mystical body by His continual assistance and by His grace, according to Saint Matthew 28:20: "I am with you all days, even

to the consummation of the world." And according to Saint John 14:18: "I will not leave you orphans." Indeed, Jesus Christ is seated upon the throne of His kingdom, as God and man together, to govern the Church by His power and by His divine authority. Matthew 28:18: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."

3. Finally, He who is seated upon the throne is also God, one in three Persons, who is adored and glorified in the Catholic Church as the sovereign Lord of all things, through His Son Jesus Christ, whom He has constituted universal heir.

VERSE 3. And he that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. Jasper is a very hard stone and of a greenish colour; it has the virtue of strengthening sight. Sardine stone is of a tender red, and metaphorically signifies the fire of charity.

It is to these two stones that he whom Saint John saw seated upon the throne is compared. These two stones represent Him by their colours, because of the truth and charity of God which are in Him - truth and charity by which He will strengthen and inflame the Church until the consummation of the ages. Moreover, He will preserve her by the immutable and infallible principles of faith, by His holy precepts, and by His perfect charity toward God and neighbour. This indeed takes place when the visible head of the Church defines and declares, from the chair of Saint Peter, the truths of faith; when he promulgates holy laws; and when he decrees what is founded upon the charity of God and of neighbour. Jesus Christ, on His part, and God one in three Persons, who is the invisible Head of this Church, enlightens the minds of the faithful and inflames them by the grace of piety, in virtue of the covenant existing between God and His Church. Matthew 28:20: "I am with you," etc.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. The rainbow signifies the covenant of Jesus Christ with His Church, just as we see in Genesis 9 that the rainbow placed between heaven and earth was also taken as the sign of the covenant which God made with men. Now this latter covenant was the type and figure of the new spiritual covenant.

It is said that this rainbow was round about the throne because this covenant between Christ and His Church will be manifest to whoever wishes to recognise it. For this, it will be enough to see and hear that this Church has always existed pure and without stain amid so many heresies and adversities, and that she has been immutable in her truth and charity. This, indeed, is a manifest sign that the Roman Church alone is the true spouse of Jesus Christ, with whom He has made an eternal covenant, giving her as pledge the holy ring of truth and charity.

This rainbow is said to be in sight like unto an emerald, because just as the greenish colour of the emerald is superior to all other colours of the same kind, so the truth of the faith and of the covenant of Jesus Christ with His Church is superior to every natural truth and every natural treaty. And just as the colour of the emerald is very pleasing to the eye, although it is of a dark shade, so also the truth of this covenant is very pleasing to the eyes of the wise and intelligent, while at the same time it appears obscure to carnal hearts, because of the adversities and calamities which God permits against His Church.

VERSE 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats, four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold.

After the description of the head or chief follows the description of the body of the Church, signified by the twenty-four ancients. The twenty-four thrones are all the archiepiscopal and episcopal sees; and the twenty-four ancients are the archbishops, bishops, and doctors. They

are represented as seated upon thrones, which is fulfilled when they are legitimately assembled in general council, united to their head, and bearing crowns of gold - that is, clothed with a special dignity, which is apostolic authority, majesty, and power.

Likewise, by the twenty-four ancients are understood the twelve Prophets of the Old Testament and the twelve Apostles of the New. They are said to be seated upon thrones because of the sovereign authority of their doctrine and the holiness of their life. For the Catholic Church has a very particular regard for these two qualities of the Apostles when she defines articles of faith or morals in general councils. And although these saints have been taken from this world, they nevertheless continue to shine in it by their apostolic and divine authority.

It is true that there are also a great number of doctors in the Church; but this does not prevent their universality from being perfectly represented by the twenty-four ancients. For Holy Scripture often uses a determined number to express an undetermined number.

These twenty-four ancients were clothed in white garments, etc. The white garment designates celibacy and priestly chastity; for this virtue is the special ornament which makes priests and princes of the Church shine, and which distinguishes them from the powers of the age.

The ancients appeared to Saint John with crowns of gold upon their heads. These words designate ecclesiastical, apostolic, and priestly dignity and power; because the Apostles, and the priesthood in general, are the princes of the churches, and they reign upon the earth. That is why Saint John tells us that they had crowns of gold upon their heads, as it is said of Aaron in Ecclesiasticus 45:14: "A crown of gold was upon his mitre, marked with the sign of holiness and the glory of honour." Now it is thus that the representatives of the priesthood of Jesus Christ wear upon their heads crowns of gold, which are the crowns of knowledge, wisdom, age, and maturity; for these are the attributes with which Our Lord Jesus Christ adorned the princes and doctors of His Church.

II. VERSE 5. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders.

By the lightnings are understood here the light of miracles which terrify and enlighten; also the proclamation of rewards for works of justice, the threatening of punishments and torments, the anathemas, excommunications, and ecclesiastical sentences fulminated against the wicked. The voices are the definitions of articles of faith and the ecclesiastical precepts established to introduce and maintain holiness of morals. The thunders, finally, are excommunications and ecclesiastical penalties which strike ipso facto heretics and rebels who do not listen to the threats and definitions of the Church, and who despise them. Now all these things proceed from the throne - that is, from the Apostolic See; for the Sovereign Pontiff is the judge of controversies in matters of faith, and the legislator for the rule of good morals.

And there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. In these words one sees the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who governs and inspires the Catholic Church at all times, in order to prevent her from failing in the interpretation of Sacred Scripture. This assistance of the Holy Spirit must also serve the Church in the counsels which she receives from Him and must put into practice in order to overcome evil, and also so that she may not be able to err in matters of faith.

VERSE 6. And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal. This sea of glass is Baptism, in which all souls who receive spiritual life exist, vegetate, live, and move. It is said that this sea was like crystal, both because of the whiteness, purity, and holiness received in it, and because of the immobility of this sea of crystal to which Baptism is

compared; because Baptism impresses an indelible character, which does not permit it to be repeated.

And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind. By the four living creatures are designated the four kinds of archchancellors of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, who obtained the first places after the head of the Church. These are the four Evangelists with their four Gospels. They are indeed in the midst of the throne and around the throne - that is, spread everywhere and traversing the whole world by means of preachers. The Psalmist, speaking of the preaching of the Gospel, says in Psalm 18:4: "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

The four Evangelists are in the midst of the throne because the Church spread throughout the whole world is based upon the doctrine contained in the four Gospels. These four living creatures are full of eyes before and behind because of the clarity of doctrine and truth contained in the Old and New Testament. The eyes before are supernatural knowledge and understanding, by means of which they penetrated and corrected the errors of the synagogue, while retaining the things necessary for salvation. The eyes behind are this same supernatural knowledge and understanding, whose rays, by their doctrine, will reach until the end of time. It was with the assistance of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles wrote the evangelical law which they received from the mouth of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the nations.

VERSE 7. And the first living creature was like a lion: and the second living creature like a calf: and the third living creature, having the face as of a man: and the fourth living creature was like an eagle flying.

First, the four Evangelists are compared to four living creatures because they describe the Nativity of Our Lord, His preaching, His Passion, and His Ascension. Indeed, Christ is represented in His Nativity as a man, in His preaching as a lion, in His Passion as a calf, and in His Ascension as an eagle.

The first living creature, by whom Saint Mark is described, is said to be like a lion because his Gospel begins by recounting the preaching of Saint John, a preaching which was like the roaring of a lion because of its admirable efficacy. Mark 1:45: "And they came to him from every side," etc. The second living creature represents Saint Luke, who is compared to a calf because his Gospel begins with the priesthood, in which the calf, and every first-born, was sacrificed to the Lord. The third living creature is the type of Saint Matthew, who is represented with a figure almost like that of a man, because his Gospel begins with the generation of Jesus Christ from the race of David. The fourth living creature, finally, who represents Saint John as under a veil, is likened to an eagle because of the sublimity of his Gospel, which rises even to heaven, penetrates the earth and every human and natural generation, and reaches, by its flight, even to the generation from the Father, saying: "In the beginning was the Word," etc.

VERSE 8. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings. The first wing is the natural law; the second, the law of Moses; the third, the oracles of the prophets; the fourth, the institutions and acts of the Apostles; the fifth, their traditions; and the sixth, finally, the general decrees of the councils.

It is said that these four living creatures each have six wings because these wings are the foundation and completion of all evangelical doctrine. Likewise, it is with these six wings that the Church flies into the four parts of the world and reaches the highest regions; and it is from them that preachers receive the foundation of every pure and true doctrine.

And round about and within they are full of eyes. That is, the eyes of these living creatures penetrate into the perfect law constituted by the six wings of which we have spoken. For the words within refer to charity and the contemplation of God; and the words round about indicate charity toward neighbour and the active life in which the Evangelists and preachers must excel.

And they rested not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. In these words follow the charge and office of these living creatures, which consist in rendering glory, honour, and blessing to the Lord God by prayer and by preaching. And they rested not day and night. For the word of God is free, and the preaching of the Gospel, as well as the glorification of the Name of Jesus, will continue until the consummation of the ages.

That is why one will never cease to hear the roaring of the lion, the lowing of the calf, the voice of the man, and the cry of the eagle. Day and night - that is, in evil times, and in the hour of darkness raised up by heretics and by the persecutors of evangelical truth. They will be heard by day - that is, in the time of true light, when the Church enjoys peace. They will be heard speaking and crying by the mouth of preachers, and in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and also in the divine offices, day and night, saying throughout the whole world: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.

The word holy is repeated three times to signify the Trinity of Persons. And these words, Lord God Almighty, designate the unity of essence. For the three Persons are but one God, the Almighty Lord, who is, who was, and who is to come. These last words express the eternity of God, who was before time, who is in time, and who will be after time - that is, from all eternity and unto ages of ages.

III. VERSE 9. And when those living creatures gave glory and honour and benediction to him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever; VERSE 10. The four and twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.

By Him who is seated upon the throne is understood God, one in three Persons, and Jesus Christ in His capacity as Monarch of the whole universe and invisible Head of the Church, which He rules and governs; and to Him are submitted, in union with the visible head of the Church, all the doctors, preachers, apostles, prophets, and princes of the churches throughout the whole earth.

And they cast their crowns before the throne, as a sign of respect, humility, and profound submission; and also because the power, honour, glory, dignity, and ecclesiastical and apostolic authority of bishops, doctors, and prelates - signified by the crowns of gold, as we have said above - derive from the throne, which is the chair of Peter.

For it will be remembered that the crowns of gold represent priestly power and dignity. These twenty-four ancients therefore cast their crowns before the throne, as a sign of the intimate union and submission which necessarily exist in the Church, because the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth constitutes a monarchy of the most perfect nature. They also cast their crowns before the throne to show that the Church holds from God all light, all power, all wisdom, and all glory upon earth. For Jesus Christ, true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is, in His capacity as invisible Head of the Church, the source of all wisdom, of all truth, and of all power, poured out by the Holy Spirit upon His Church.

That is why we render to Him the worship of adoration due to His divine essence. From this the Apostle continues, saying:

VERSE 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. It is not that God acquires anything more by human works and praises; but men, in recognition of the benefits which they have received from Him, are bound to praise and glorify the excellence, goodness, wisdom, and power of the eternal Majesty, who, by the blood of His Son Jesus, founded this monarchy of the Church, so perfect, so glorious, so admirable, and so powerful, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

Moreover, the twenty-four ancients fell down before Him who sits upon the throne, and they adored Him who lives for ever and ever. This takes place when the living creatures spoken of above render glory, honour, power, and blessing to Him who sits upon the throne; for they hold from the Gospels the knowledge of this truth: that one must adore only one true God, with His only Son Jesus Christ.

Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because Thou hast created all things, drawing the universe and all that it contains out of nothing; and also because Thou hast established and ordered this kingdom of the Church upon earth by Thy infinite wisdom and in the goodness of Thy eternal will.

For thou hast created all things; and for thy will they were, and have been created. These words indicate that it is according to the good pleasure of the divine will that all creatures, all kingdoms - in a word, the entire universe - tend toward this first and last end, and that it directs toward them all honour, all glory, all power and empire, etc., as an arrow directs itself toward its mark. And for thy will they were - that is, before being created they existed from all eternity in the free disposition of Thy goodness, O Lord, and in the will of Thy wisdom, as a house already exists in the imagination of the architect before its construction. And have been created - that is, produced and effected in time by the divine will of Thy wisdom, by Thy free and pure goodness, and not by a necessity of nature.

CHAPTER 5

The Book of Seven Seals and the Lamb Who Was Slain

Revelation 5:1–14

§ 1. What Is This Book Written Within and Without, Sealed with Seven Seals? Chapter 5, Verses 1-4

I. After Saint John had described the majesty, nature, and intrinsic constitution of the Catholic Church, there was opened to him, in his capacity as intimate secretary of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth, the book of the secrets and disposition of God concerning His Church. This book contains everything that must happen until the consummation of the ages. These revelations were made in particular and in order; and they contain an instruction that is profound, salutary, and supremely necessary.

The Wisdom of the heavenly Father left this book to His beloved children, as a prudent monarch is accustomed to do before his death, leaving to his son, besides the secrets of his kingdom, particular counsels on the manner of governing. He warns him, for example, of the wars that may arise, of the enemies who are most to be feared, and finally of what must be done or avoided in the difficult cases that may present themselves. Now it is in this way - and with far greater wisdom still - that, in His fatherly love and solicitude for His elect, God has caused us, in a certain manner, to penetrate into the abyss of His ineffable foreknowledge, by showing Saint John the desolations, consolations, and most notable and essential events that will happen in the Church until the consummation of the ages.

VERSE 1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals. These words announce the depth of the divine secrets contained in this book. Indeed, one finds there a science, a divine disposition, and a particular intention concerning His Church. It is said that everything in it is described in metaphorical form. And just as the important writings of a kingdom are carefully preserved in archives, so the things which God has decreed to do and to permit, in His absolute will, remain fixed and immutable.

One must first admit, on the basis of theology: 1. That God knows, in the most certain and most perfect manner, all possible things, even though they neither existed nor ever will exist. 2. That He sees all existing or contingent things without being limited by any distinction of time, whether past, present, or future. 3. Besides the two kinds of knowledge just mentioned, there is a third which holds the middle place: it concerns things which may happen conditionally.

Now in the description of the seven ages of the Church given in chapters 2 and 3, many things are revealed according to this last science or knowledge of God. This does not, however, prevent the things contained in this book from having been written according to the science of vision; for all these things exist in the operative power of God, and are decreed by His divine will as things to be done or permitted in time.

It is said that Saint John saw this book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. Now the right hand of God metaphorically signifies His operative power. And just as we act with

the right hand, so God acts by His will. For He spoke, and all things were made; He commanded, and all things were created. Psalm 32:10-11: "The Lord bringeth to nought the counsels of nations; and he rejecteth the devices of people, and casteth away the counsels of princes. But the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever: the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Psalm 113:11: "Our God is in heaven: he hath done all things whatsoever he would." And again, Psalm 148:5-6: "For he spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created. He hath established them for ever, and for ages of ages: he hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away."

Him that sat upon the throne. Here again there is question of the Lord God - that is, of Jesus Christ invisibly seated upon the Apostolic See, ruling and governing His Church, and adored by all Christians in His Humanity.

By the things written within the book are understood those which are most obscure and abstract for human understanding, and which must be accomplished in the course of the ages of the Church, and particularly in the last times, according to the revelation made of them to Saint John. By the things written outside the book are designated those which are clearer and more visible, and which Saint John himself explained; and also those things which had already been accomplished when the Apocalypse was written, and again those which were to be accomplished shortly afterward.

A seal is placed upon letters to prevent them from being read. It is also placed upon acts, testaments, and books to give them greater authority. Thus kings place their seal upon their edicts, and they also will that their ambassadors should use it to accredit their acts. The seal of God is His divine will, which has hidden, from the origin of the world, and preserves as a secret in His thought, His divine, admirable, or terrible works, and everything which, by His permission, must happen to His Church until the end of time.

Now these secrets of the Apocalypse He revealed to no prophet, no patriarch, and no man; not even to the angels, until the coming of His Son Jesus Christ, to whose humanity He revealed them, showing Him these seven seals and giving Him the power to break them. This is why it is said below that no one was able either in heaven, with regard to the angels; or on earth, with regard to men; or under the earth, with regard to the patriarchs who were in limbo, to open the book, to loose its seven seals, or to look upon it.

Although the seal or divine secret is one, considered in itself, it is nevertheless said, with regard to its outward manifestation, that this book of the secrets of God was sealed with seven seals, to signify the diversity of the times and ages of the Church, during which Jesus Christ was to manifest the wonders and prodigies known to God. He was to accomplish this by pouring out the seven gifts of His Spirit according to the diversity of times, men, and ages of His Church, until the consummation of the ages, for the salvation of His elect. And this book is also said to be sealed with seven seals which Jesus Christ was to break, in order to give us a testimony of faith and an assurance of the accomplishment of the divine secrets.

VERSE 2. And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? These words express the difficulty of understanding and executing the decrees of God concerning His Church. This strong angel is the Archangel Gabriel, whose name signifies the power and strength of God. This angel is the special envoy of the Divinity and the legate of Christ; and it was in this capacity that he announced the Incarnation of the Word. Luke 1.

VERSE 3. And no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the book, nor to look on it. No one was able in heaven, with regard to the angels; nor on earth, with regard to men; nor under the earth, with regard to the patriarchs, the prophets, and the ancients who were in limbo, to open the book, nor to look upon it. For no finite power

could penetrate, reveal, or realise the secrets of God concerning the Church and the kingdom of Christ. Nothing less than the wisdom and power of the Divinity was required for this.

This is why the Archangel Gabriel says in Luke 1:31-33: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever." It is also for this reason that theologians teach, in the treatise on the Incarnation, that the work of the redemption of the human race could not be entrusted to any ordinary man or to any angel.

The reason for this is: 1. No ordinary man, and no angel, could worthily satisfy divine justice. 2. No man, however holy he might be, and no angel, could conform himself to the divine will, or recognise it, amid the horrible tribulations and evils with which the Church was afflicted, when, for example, she had to swim in the blood of her innumerable martyrs for three hundred years. No man and no angel could ever have conceived the numerous heresies over which the Church had so much to groan, nor the still more astonishing trials which she will have to undergo at the end of time, if Jesus Christ had not given us the example in His Passion, and if He had not forewarned and instructed us in the Gospel and in this book of the Apocalypse. 3. The power and cunning of this world were so full of malice that the reign of the Church militant, reduced to human strength, could never have reached its end and fully developed without the all-powerful virtue of the Son of God.

VERSE 4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book, nor to see it. These tears express the desire and solicitude of Saint John to penetrate into the admirable secret of the ages of the Church - a secret whose knowledge and development were above all human powers, and on which, nevertheless, the salvation of the just depended. This is why he says: And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book - that is, to accomplish its secrets - nor to see it, in order to know the will of God.

§ 2. On the Acclamation Made to Christ Because of the Opening of the Sealed Book. Chapter 5, Verses 5-14

VERSE 5. And one of the ancients said to me: Weep not; behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. These words ought to console us in all tribulations. One of these ancients is Saint Peter, the first among the Apostles, as it is said in Genesis 1:5: "And the evening and morning were one day" - that is, the first day.

Behold the lion of the tribe of Juda... hath prevailed, etc. This lion of the tribe of Juda is Christ, of the race of David according to the flesh, in whom the prophecy of Jacob is fulfilled. Genesis 49:8-12: "Juda, thee shall thy brethren praise: thy hands shall be on the necks of thy enemies; the sons of thy father shall bow down to thee. Juda is a lion's whelp: to the prey, my son, thou art gone up. Resting thou hast couched as a lion, and as a lioness: who shall rouse him? The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent: and he shall be the expectation of nations. Tying his foal to the vineyard, and his ass, O my son, to the vine. He shall wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of the grape. His eyes are more beautiful than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk."

Behold... the root of David - that is, Christ, of the race of David according to the flesh, of whom Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 11:1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," etc. It is by this divine shoot that Saint Peter consoles the whole Church in the person of Saint John, when he says: Behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed, etc. That is to say, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, has conquered the

world, the flesh, the devil, death, every power and all the wisdom of the world, and every tyranny, etc.

The root of David, who has prevailed to open the book - that is, to reveal to His holy Church the thought and will of His Father in the evils and persecutions she would have to endure. And to loose the seven seals thereof - to accomplish all things in their time, by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit proceeding from His mouth, for the salvation of His elect and for the preservation of His Church, until the age should be consummated and the number of His elect complete.

II. VERSE 6. And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. This Lamb is Christ Our Lord.

It is said that He is in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, because the universal Church belongs to Him as though she were His throne. He has fed her as one feeds living creatures, inasmuch as He is her shepherd. The Church is honoured as the ancients are honoured, established to judge upon the seat of piety. This Church, being built upon Christ, is exalted by the seven horns of His power and enlightened by the seven eyes - that is, by His miracles and by His virtues. For Christ is continually in the midst of His Church, as is said in Saint Matthew 28:20: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Just as Christ was called a lion because of His Resurrection, so He is here given the name Lamb because He was immolated. He is represented standing, as being risen to eternal life. Romans 6:9: "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more." This Lamb is also represented standing because He fights with His saints upon the earth and watches over His Church. Thus, in his martyrdom, Saint Stephen saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of the power of God.

Then follow these words: Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. These Spirits are those described in Isaiah 11. These Spirits rest upon Christ, and are metaphorically designated by horns and by eyes: by horns because of divine power, and by eyes because of the splendour of the truth with which these eyes shine. Christ fights with these horns against His enemies, and it is also with these eyes that He enlightens His servants. These horns and these eyes are seven in number, to designate all the virtue and all the power which Christ displays in the different ages, until the consummation of the ages, in favour of His Church.

The Lamb is represented as it were slain: 1. Because He is immolated each day when the host of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is offered to God the Father in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in memory of His immolation according to the flesh. This is why it is not said simply "slain," but as it were slain. 2. He is represented as it were slain because of the patience and longanimity with which He permits His enemies and all the impious to dominate and afflict His Church upon the earth. This patience and longanimity of Christ are carried to such a point that the wicked, and even the weak who do not properly understand this way of proceeding in divine providence, take scandal against the faith from it. They are tempted to believe that Jesus Christ does not exist, or that He does not concern Himself at all with His Church, when He does not manifest His power by outward acts of protection.

VERSE 7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. One must not understand by these words that Jesus Christ received knowledge of the destinies of the Church. For Christ, from the instant of His conception - in which the Divinity was united in an admirable manner to the humanity in the unity of His Person - had perfect

knowledge of all the things which God Himself knows by the science of vision. Now among the things known in this way are also contained the destinies of the Church, as is seen from what was said above.

Therefore, by the fact that Saint John saw Jesus Christ open the book, one must understand: 1. That the knowledge already infused into the soul of Jesus Christ from the beginning of His creation was to be communicated to Saint John and, in his person, to the whole Church. 2. By the reception of the book from the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, one understands the execution and effective realisation of the divine secrets concerning the Church, manifested outwardly. And because the knowledge and execution of these things surpass all natural powers, Saint John wept until it was shown to him that Christ, as a terrible lion and as a most gentle lamb, would resolve and execute all things by His meekness and by His power.

VERSE 8. And when he had opened the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. These words contain the applause, glory, jubilation, honour, and adoration of the Church militant and triumphant toward her Head, Jesus Christ. These words further show us what homage of love and gratitude the Catholic Church must render to Christ.

And when he had opened it - to reveal and realise in their time the destinies of the Church - the four living creatures, that is, all the preachers in the four parts of the world, and the four and twenty ancients, who are the patriarchs, primates, archbishops, bishops, prelates, priests, etc., fell down before the Lamb, that is, they adored the Lamb, their true God and the Lord of all things.

Having every one of them harps - that is, the mortification of vices and concupiscence. For in the harp there is wood and strings. The wood designates the Cross of Christ, and the strings signify the crucified and mortified flesh of the saints. Now these strings, stretched upon so noble a wood and set in vibration by the very varied torments which the Church militant must endure, produce a sweet accord and a pleasant harmony for the ears of Jesus Christ. And golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

They sang a new canticle. In the Old Testament, several canticles were composed in honour and glory of those who brought about the salvation of Israel, or to the praise of Almighty God, who so often did admirable things in favour of His people. But here there is question of a new canticle, by which man adores and glorifies God, who has not only procured for us salvation and redemption in time, but also in eternity, by redeeming us from captivity, servitude, and the tyranny of the devil. Thus the Lord God has never done, since the origin of the world, things so admirable and so great in His love as those of sending His only Son made man upon the earth, who was to redeem us by His Passion and by His death, and to send us the Holy Spirit after His Resurrection.

VERSE 9. And they sung a new canticle, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof. That is to say: it is just and fitting, Lord, that Thou shouldst receive from God the Father universal and eternal power over Thy Church, because Thou art her founder and protector. It is thus that the children of Israel said to Gideon in Judges 8:22: "Rule thou over us, and thy son, and thy son's son also: because thou hast delivered us from the hand of Madian." Now it is with far greater reason that the Church applauds Jesus Christ and says to Him: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us - reconciling us with God infinitely offended - and hast redeemed us by thy blood of infinite price out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. For the Church is the assembly of all nations and of all tribes. A tribe is composed

of three orders, in each of which there are seventy-two languages. In these languages are found many peoples, and in these peoples many nations.

VERSE 10. And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And thou hast made us kings and priests for our God - by gathering us together from all nations, and by subjecting us to the service and will of the Father through the evangelical law: we who were under the empire of demons through infidelity and idolatry, and under the yoke of the Law of Moses. And thou hast made us... priests - not like those of the Old Testament, who offered the flesh and blood of animals, or like those of paganism, who sacrificed to demons through their idols; but Thou hast made us priests according to the order of Melchizedek, to offer each day, in the sacrifice of the Mass, Thy Body and Thy Precious Blood: a sacrifice which Thou, Lord and High Priest, Thyself first offered upon the tree of the Cross. And we shall reign on the earth - in Thy militant kingdom, over every tribe, every tongue, every people, and every nation. And we shall be seated upon twenty-four seats - that is, upon the patriarchal, archiepiscopal, episcopal seats, and so forth.

VERSE 11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands. Here there is question of all the tutelary angels of the churches, of the provinces, and of the whole Christian universe, whose number, without doubt, extends to thousands of thousands. All have received a mission and an order from God to watch over our salvation and over that of the whole Church. It is for this reason that they are said to be around the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients, because of the particular assistance which they give to the churches, to preachers, and to bishops.

VERSE 12. The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction. This acclamation is addressed to the humanity of Christ, because of His divine hypostasis, by the angels, who proclaim Him worthy - Him whom Lucifer, with his apostates, judged unworthy from the beginning of creation. From this one sees that what belongs only to the three divine Persons is attributed to the humanity of Jesus Christ.

VERSE 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea: and all that are in them, I heard all saying. These words announce the power of Christ over the Church triumphant; over the earth, that is, also His power over the Church militant; under the earth, over the bodies of the martyrs and the dead, in the domain of death; and over those who are upon the sea, that is, over sailors; and in the sea, that is, His power over the bodies of the holy martyrs who were cast into it. This acclamation may also be understood of all creatures, even of those which are deprived of reason and understanding.

I heard them all saying, to him that sitteth on the throne - to God, one in three Persons - and to the Lamb, that is, to the humanity of Jesus Christ, which is the light in which God, one in three Persons, now shines as in a mirror, and in which He will shine for eternity, when the saints shall see Him and contemplate Him face to face.

VERSE 14. Benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said: Amen. This is an acclamation of truth which suits and belongs to the four Evangelists and to preachers. And the four and twenty ancients fell down on their faces, humbling themselves concerning the power and authority which had been granted to them upon the earth, and they adored him that liveth for ever and ever.

CHAPTER 6

The Opening of the Six Seals

Revelation 6:1–17

Book Three: On Chapters Six and Seven

On the Opening and Explanation of the Seven Seals; and on the Consolations of the Church Triumphant and Militant After Past Tribulations

Section I: On Chapter 6 - On the Opening and Explanation of the Six First Seals

I. Saint John, after having sufficiently described, by the divine revelation made to him, the nature of the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal constitution of His kingdom, and the majesty which results from it, continues to give in detail the particular events which will mark the course of the Church until the consummation of the ages. He enumerates, for example, the horrible persecutions, the heresies, the reigns of tyrants, and also the consolations which the Church will receive, each in its own time. All these things are revealed at the opening of the seven seals.

But before beginning, it is fitting to observe here: 1. That the horses and those who ride them signify, in this description, a spiritual war between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world. 2. The Apostle depicts four kinds of these horsemen to signify that this spiritual war will take place in the four parts of the world. 3. He divides this general war into two principal epochs: a. that of the Jews and Gentiles; b. that of the heretics and of Antichrist, until the consummation of the ages. The first epoch is contained and described in the opening of the first six seals; and the second in the seventh and last seal, as the continuation will show. 4. The voices of the four Evangelists are added here as a testimony of the truth which must be preached in the four parts of the world. And it is this testimony which will be the occasion of every war and every persecution on the part of tyrants.

§ 1. On the Opening of the Four First Seals; and on the Four Horsemen Who Were Shown to Saint John at the Opening of These Seals. Chapter 6, Verses 1-8

I. The opening of the first seal is the warlike expedition of Jesus Christ, who, coming into this world in order to make war upon it, decreed, for the most just reasons, to subject it to His power and to bend all His enemies beneath the yoke of the faith. The army which He sent throughout the whole universe for this purpose was composed of the twelve Apostles and the assembly of all the faithful.

VERSE 1. And I saw that the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures, as it were the voice of thunder, saying: Come, and see.

And I saw, in imagination and in spirit, that the Lamb had opened and executed one - the first and principal - of the seven seals, according to the will of His Father, who sent into the world His only Son made man, and constituted Him King of the universe. Now, since neither the Jews nor the Gentiles wished to receive Him, Christ saw Himself obliged to take the

offensive, and to make war upon them with His army, in order to be able to enter into His kingdom and into His glory.

And I heard, again in imagination and in spirit, one - the first - of the four living creatures, or of the four Evangelists: that is, Saint Matthew, who says, in the same chapter in which he describes this terrible war that Jesus Christ makes against the world: "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves." And I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as it were the voice of thunder. Indeed, Saint Matthew, the first witness of evangelical truth, announces with a strong voice the terrible war which will follow the preaching of the Gospel, saying: Come, and see. This is a manner of speaking intended to excite someone's special attention to a thing.

II. VERSE 2. And I saw: and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.

This text describes the commander-in-chief of this army, together with his power and his strength. And I saw: and behold a white horse. This horse is the assembly of the Apostles and disciples of Christ. It is said to be white by metaphor, because of the candour, purity, truth, simplicity, and holiness of His army. For just as a white horse receives its name and colour from the whiteness of its hair, so the saints obtain their holiness, or the whiteness of their purity, from sanctifying grace. They are compared to a horse because of the strength and speed with which they travelled throughout the whole universe in a very short time, preaching there the Gospel and the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And he that sat on him had a bow. These words apply to Christ, who is the great leader of this war, and who is represented as seated upon His own, directing them with the bridle of the fear of the Lord, and spurring them on to the race with the spurs of charity toward God and neighbour, and by the help of His holy grace, with which the Apostles and the other disciples of the primitive Church were abundantly provided. The bow designates the virtue and the weapons with which Christ was to fight His enemies. These weapons are preaching and miracles. For Christ directed the preaching of the Apostles as the bow directs the arrow toward its target. Mark 16:20: "But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed." The efficacy and invincible strength of the Word are also expressed in Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword."

And there was a crown given him. This means royal power; for all power has been given to Christ in heaven and on earth. Jesus Christ is therefore the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and He has received from His Father the crown of the eternal kingdom, the crown of the victory which He won, in His Resurrection and Ascension, over all kings, over the tyrants of this world, and over all the infernal powers.

And he went forth on this white horse, with His Apostles and disciples, to traverse the world as conqueror, and to subdue His adversaries. He went first into Judea, where, in a single day, His Apostle Saint Peter converted three thousand men, Acts 2; and on another day five thousand, Acts 4. And he went forth... that he might conquer the whole earth, bending beneath His dominion and beneath the yoke of faith the chiefs of the nations. For in a short time, through the preaching of the Apostles and the other disciples - "the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed" - the Gospel was preached, and the Catholic faith was spread even to the ends of the earth, during the lifetime of Saint Peter himself, as is seen in history and in the Acts of the Apostles, and as was announced in Psalm 18:4: "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world."

III. VERSES 3 AND 4. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature, saying: Come, and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and to him that sat thereon, it was given that he should take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and a great sword was given to him.

The Apostle describes by these words the first and one of the most terrible tyrants of the Church: Domitius Nero, who dared, at the instigation of Satan, to make war upon the Apostles and to attack the Christians, who are the army of Jesus Christ. This cruel enemy delivered to the flames a great part of the city of Rome, in the darkness of the night, for the pleasure of representing the burning of Troy. He made use of this occasion to accuse the Christians of Rome, and to stir up against them the first persecution, which raged chiefly in that city.

His hatred went so far that he made sport of the victims who fell. They were clothed with the skins of beasts, in order to excite against them the fury of dogs; they were crucified; they were smeared with pitch in order to serve as torches during the night. The number of Christians burned in this persecution was so considerable that human fat, flowing upon the arena of the amphitheatres, left traces there. This most cruel tyrant put to death Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Seneca his tutor, and did not spare even his own mother, his wife, his brother, and his sisters. It is therefore with justice that the Apostle applies to him the description given above.

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying: Come, and see. This second living creature is Saint Luke, who here bears witness to the truth concerning the holy martyrs whom Nero caused to be slaughtered. For it has been said above that this living creature was like a calf, because his Gospel begins with the priesthood, through which calves were immolated in sacrifice and as a victim pleasing to the Lord God. Now it is thus also that the just and the Christians were immolated by the impious, and that their blood and their death were a sacrifice most pleasing to God the Father, through His Son Jesus, who was immolated for us all.

VERSE 4. And there went out another horse that was red. This horse is the Roman people under Domitius Nero. It is properly called red because of the burning of the city of Rome and the burning of so many Christians; and also because of the shedding of their blood, as has been said above.

And to him that sat thereon, it was given - that is, God permitted the emperor Nero, who sat at Rome in the year 53, to show himself so cruel toward the Christians. It is in the same sense that Jesus Christ says to Pilate, John 19:11: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above."

And to him that sat thereon, it was given that he should take peace from the earth. First, with regard to the Christians whom he caused to be persecuted and put to flight, especially at Rome and elsewhere also. Second, with regard also to his empire, which was disturbed by his wicked deeds, cruelty, slaughter, and blind tyranny. This is why it is said of him that he took peace from the earth, the peace which Octavius Augustus had given to the whole universe.

And that they should kill one another. This was verified on account of his perfidy. Nero having been assassinated, Sergius Galba the elder usurped the empire, and adopted as his son Piso the Younger, a man of corrupt morals, whom he designated as his successor. Piso was killed in the forum by the soldiers of the factious Otho. Three months later, this same Otho, having been defeated by the army of Vitellius, killed himself. And before the year had passed, Vitellius, defeated in three battles fought against him in Rome itself by the partisans of Vespasian, was dragged naked through the streets of the city, slaughtered, and finally thrown into the Tiber. And a great sword was given to him - that is, the power to kill

Christians. For Nero was the first among the Roman emperors to stir up persecution against the Church. He put to death the princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, and a great number of Christians, both in the city and throughout the empire.

IV. VERSE 5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature, saying: Come, and see. And behold a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand.

VERSE 6. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying: Two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny: and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil.

These words describe the sack of the city of Jerusalem and the extermination of the synagogue of the Jews, which had to take place in order to fulfil the word of Christ in Matthew 23 and Luke 13. By this third living creature is understood the Evangelist Saint Mark, who was compared above to a lion, because his Gospel begins with the preaching of penance by Saint John the Baptist to the Jews, who rejected his word as they also rejected that of Jesus Christ Himself. It is therefore as a just consequence of the hardness of their heart that Christ here reveals to Saint John this punishment and this extermination of the Jewish nation and synagogue.

And behold a black horse. This black horse is the city of Jerusalem with its inhabitants. It is black: 1. Because of the blindness of the Jews and of the synagogue, who put Our Lord Jesus Christ to death, refused to believe in His divinity, and resisted the Holy Spirit even after having witnessed the Resurrection of the Saviour. 2. This horse is black because of the unheard-of famine which caused, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, up to 1,100,000 souls to perish at Jerusalem.

Titus, son of Vespasian, blockaded the city and surrounded it with a wall of forty stadia - about 5,000 paces, or roughly two leagues - and caused to be built outside these walls thirteen forts, each 1,250 paces in circumference, in order more easily to reduce its inhabitants. This immense work was completed in the space of three days, that is, with a speed above human strength, so that the word of Christ might be fulfilled. Luke 19:43-44: "For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side; and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone." This was fulfilled literally when Titus overturned the city of Jerusalem from top to bottom and occupied it.

And he that sat on him was Flavius Vespasian, who mounted the throne of the empire in the year of Jesus Christ 69. And it was his son who besieged the city and reduced it under his power, together with the whole Jewish nation, in the year 79. He had a pair of scales in his hand. This was the balance of divine justice, of which he was the executor. For it was by the order of God that this son of Vespasian caused the Jewish nation to perish miserably by famine, by the sword, and by captivity, in order to chastise it for its unheard-of malice and cruelty, and to avenge the death of Jesus Christ. This vengeance was not, indeed, the goal that Titus and his army proposed to themselves; for they ruined that nation because it had revolted against the Roman Empire, as is seen in the history of Josephus, De Bello Judaico. This is why the text says: He had a pair of scales in his hand, and not in his spirit, intention, or will. For he was only the instrument of divine justice, which used the hand of Titus to execute its decrees.

And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, etc. These words contain the sentence of condemnation fulminated by divine justice against the Jewish people because of its incomparable crime. And I heard a voice - the voice of divine justice - as

it were in the midst of the four living creatures, that is, from the throne of God, around which are the four living creatures, both in the militant kingdom and in the triumphant kingdom of Christ. These words show again that Titus, in what he did against the Jews, was only the executor of divine vengeance; for it is from God alone that the punishment of crimes proceeds. Amos 3:6: "Shall there be evil in a city, which the Lord hath not done?"

Two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny. To understand these words: 1. One must notice what Hugh of Florence says about the end of the war of the Romans against the Jews: the Romans, finally weary of so much slaughter, sought to sell their prisoners as slaves. But because there were far more sellers than buyers, it often happened that as many as thirty Jewish slaves were handed over for one piece of silver. The Jews had bought their Master for thirty pieces of silver; thus, by return and by contrast, up to thirty of them were sold for a single penny. 2. One must also note that the word in the Latin text, bilibris, is composed of bis, two, and libra, pound - that is, two pounds, which make a drachma. 3. Finally, one must know that five Jews designate a pound, because the five books of Moses were admitted by all the Jews and by each of them in particular. 4. Wheat signifies the most powerful, the most skilful, and the noblest among the Jews. Barley, on the contrary, being an inferior kind of grain, indicates the lower class of this people. 5. By the wine and the oil, which the text commands not to hurt, are understood the Christians, who were in fact spared by the army of Titus. For before the siege of Jerusalem, the Christians who were in the city and in Judea were warned by an angel, and crossed the Jordan to take refuge in the city of Pella, which formed part of the kingdom of Agrippa, an ally of the Romans. Moreover, wine metaphorically signifies charity toward God, and oil charity toward neighbour.

From all that has just been said, one may understand this passage: Two pounds of wheat - that is, ten principal men among the Jews - for a penny; and thrice two pounds of barley - that is, thirty persons from the lower people - for a penny. And see thou hurt not the wine and the oil - that is, the Christians were to be preserved.

V. VERSE 7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature, saying: Come, and see. VERSE 8. And behold a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

After the Jewish nation - that relentless enemy of Jesus Christ and of all Christians - had been conquered and destroyed, Domitian stirred up against the Christians the second general persecution, and waged cruel war against Christianity. Here it is a question of the person of the Evangelist Saint John himself, considered in particular, inasmuch as he occupies the fourth place of honour and dignity in the militant and triumphant kingdom of Christ, and inasmuch as he confirms evangelical truth by his testimony.

And behold a pale horse. This is the Roman people, pale because of the fear inspired in it by the tyrant Domitian, a cruel and avaricious prince. This emperor pushed his fury so far as to have himself called God. Moreover, he sent into exile or caused to be massacred a great part of the senators and nobles, imputing crimes to them in order to seize their goods. Consequently, all the rest of the people, both in Rome and in the provinces, conceived the greatest fear of being treated in the same manner. Now, since fright produces paleness, it is truly said here that the Roman people of that time resembled a pale horse.

And he that sat upon him - the emperor Domitian, who was raised to the empire in the year of Jesus Christ 81 - his name was Death. 1. Because he caused, as has been said, a great number of innocents to be massacred, and especially Christians, against whom he stirred up the second persecution, which may be considered as a continuation and consequence of that

of Nero. 2. Because he fell into snares and was himself killed by the freedman of the consul Clement, whom he had caused to be condemned under the pretext of impiety; and thus he disappeared, and even his memory was effaced.

And hell followed him. That is, having died in his impiety in a sudden and unforeseen manner, this unhappy man was cast into the abysses of hell.

And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, in which the Roman Empire then extended, to kill with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. These words show the cruelty of this persecution by the variety of torments and by the diverse kinds of death which accompanied it. This tyrant caused men to die: 1. By the sword. For by his order a great quantity of Christians perished by the sword in all parts of his empire. 2. By famine. For several died in prisons, devoured by hunger. 3. By death. These words designate in general the various tortures inflicted on Christians to put them to death: they were hanged, drowned, burned, and suffocated. 4. And by the beasts of the earth. That is, men took delight in this particular kind of torment, which consisted in exposing Christians, in mockery and for amusement, to be devoured by wild beasts. One has only to read, to be convinced of this, the ecclesiastical histories, the martyrology, and the lives of the saints.

§ 2. On the Opening of the Fifth Seal. Chapter 6, Verses 9-11

VERSE 9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. VERSE 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? VERSE 11. And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up.

At the opening of the fifth seal, one sees the continuation of the persecutions against the Christians, persecutions which lasted from the Emperor Trajan until Diocletian - that is, for the space of two hundred years.

For in the year 98 after Jesus Christ, Ulpius Trajan, of Spanish origin, stirred up the third persecution against the Church of Christ. This prince imagined that he had received his throne from Jupiter himself, whom he had always worshipped with a distinguished piety; and since he was, moreover, very superstitious in the worship of idols, he was the first to recall the ancient religion to the memory of the senate, making it the senate's duty to preserve it. For at that time, according to Juvenal and Plutarch, the Christians were multiplying over the whole earth; the idols were falling into forgetfulness and contempt; the victims no longer found buyers; and most of the oracles were becoming silent. This is what gave occasion to the third persecution against the Christians. Afterward, however, the Church enjoyed a moment of rest under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, who issued no edict against her.

But in the year of Christ 161, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus having ascended the throne, stirred up a new storm against Christianity; and this fourth persecution took from the Church Polycarp, Justin, and a considerable number of the faithful.

Under the princes Commodus, Antoninus, Pertinax, and Titus Julianus, the Church again had peace for a time, until the reign of Septimius Severus, in the year 193. Then began the fifth persecution, in which, among others, Saint Irenaeus died. This tyrant was so terrible that a great number of the faithful took him for Antichrist. Antoninus Bassianus Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, and Marcus Aurelius Severus exercised no new hostility.

The author of the sixth persecution was Julius Maximinus. It was attributed to the great jealousy of this prince against the Alexandrian family, several members of which professed the faith of Jesus Christ. He ascended the throne in the year 235.

Decius, another bitter enemy of the Christians, began to reign in the year 249 and was the author of the seventh persecution. God permitted it because of the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline. This is what Saint Cyprian, an eyewitness, clearly demonstrates in his work Liber de Lapsis, when he says: "Torments came - torments without end and without issue, which brought no relief of death; torments which did not easily lead to the crown of glory, but made the victims groan until they weakened, excepting some whom God, in His mercy, deigned to call to eternal glory by a death swifter than the torment."

Gregory of Nyssa, the Wonderworker, also says: "The civil power omitted no means, public or private, to seize the faithful and to punish those who practised the maxims of the faith. Everything was employed: the terror of threats, the infinite variety of torments, the sword, fire, pits, instruments and apparatuses intended to tear the limbs, iron chairs made red-hot in the fire, racks, iron claws, and innumerable other torments which were ceaselessly invented to terrify men before they were even put to the test. The only concern of those who thus exercised power was that no one should be able to surpass their refinement and their wickedness. Some made themselves accusers; others, judges; others, finally, inquisitors of those who fled. These tyrants cast covetous eyes upon the property of the faithful in order to seize it; or else, under a pretext of piety and religion, they pursued those who embraced the faith."

A great number of Christians found themselves forced to abandon their homeland and withdraw into the solitude of mountains and desert regions. Among these is cited Paul, the prince of anchorites. Moreover, many of these unhappy persons denied the faith in this persecution: some by publicly sacrificing to idols; others, without directly denying religion, accepted through weakness certificates - libelli - from the prefects and civil officials, by means of which certain Christians protected themselves from persecutions, so as not to be forced to sacrifice publicly to the gods.

In the year 254, Licinius Valerian became emperor; and, following the counsel of a magician from Egypt, he ordered the eighth persecution, in which Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, died. This persecution raged with such force that Dionysius of Alexandria believed that the most terrible of times had arrived, and that the prophecy concerning Antichrist, contained in the Apocalypse of Saint John, had been fulfilled in Valerian.

The ninth persecution took place under Gallienus, in the year 262. Various calamities, however, forced him to restrain his fury. But this persecution was rekindled in the year 272 by Valerian Aurelian, who continued it. There were many other intermediate emperors who reigned between these tyrants, and under whom several Christians obtained the crown of martyrdom. But they must be distinguished from those whom we have cited, because the latter attacked and persecuted the Church more particularly by the edicts which they published or renewed, while the former did not.

Such was then the face of the Church, which continually swam in the blood of her martyrs for the space of three hundred years - and this by an astonishing permission of God against His friends and His spouse, who is so dear to Him. These persecutions explain to us the great cry and astonishment of the saints of God beneath the altar, of which the text speaks next.

VERSE 9. And when he had opened the fifth seal - that is, these almost continual persecutions - I saw, in imagination and in spirit, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain - that is, the souls of the martyrs, whose bodies rested beneath the altar. This is a manner of speaking which is also found in Exodus 1:5: "All the souls" - that is, all the men -

"that came out of Jacob." Under the reign of these tyrants there were no churches or fixed altars. Rather, wooden altars were set up in secret places, and especially in the crypts of the martyrs, where their bodies were placed. This is why the Apostle says that he saw, beneath the altar, the souls of those who had given their life for the word of God. These words apply to the doctors who suffered martyrdom because of the preaching of the word of God and for bearing testimony to Him. They are also said of simple faithful people who were immolated because, far from wishing to deny Jesus Christ, they openly declared that they believed in Him.

VERSE 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, etc. These words must be interpreted morally, as in Genesis 4:10: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth." Now the voice of the innocent blood of the martyrs cries all the more loudly to the Lord in proportion as the persecution and the power of the impious were more general, more cruel, and longer. All these martyrs cried with a loud voice, saying: O Lord, holy and true, how long dost thou delay? That is: How long, O Lord, holy and true, Thou who art just, Thou who seest the iniquity of the impious - how long wilt Thou permit the innocent to be so cruelly treated? These words express great astonishment that God allowed His Church, so dear and so holy, to swim for three centuries in the blood of so many martyrs, while the impious triumphed. This state of the saints must teach us to suffer for the Name of Jesus; and this passage shows us that God does not always manifest His love in this world by consolations and prosperity, but often, on the contrary, by tribulations, persecutions, and contempt from men.

O Lord, holy and true, how long dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? That is, on the tyrants and their ministers who dominate in the world.

VERSE 11. And white robes were given to every one of them one. These white robes signify the heavenly glory which was given to each martyr and to each saint, according to the measure of their merits. This is why the text says that a white robe was given to each one - that is, eternal glory to each martyr in particular.

And it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up. By these words, God consoles His Church, of whom the holy martyrs were representatives, as they interpellated and appealed to divine justice; and He promises her rest, which the Church did in fact obtain under Constantine the Great.

It was said to them - that is, these martyrs received a divine answer. First, concerning the Church militant, it was said to them that they must have patience and submit themselves to the divine will, which had pleased, from all eternity, to permit these persecutions for the greater glory of His servants. It was said to them, moreover, to wait still for a little time, until the last persecution - which was the cruelest of all - the persecution raised up by Diocletian and Maximian, as we shall see in what follows. Till their fellow-servants and their brethren should be filled up - that is, until the number of the other martyrs who served God as they did in the ministry of Christ, and of their brethren in the charity of Jesus Christ, who had to suffer death in the time of Diocletian, in the last of the ten principal persecutions, even as they had done - that is, even as those who were immolated in the preceding persecutions - should be completed.

Second, these martyrs received a divine answer concerning the Church triumphant. It was said to them that they should rest - that their bodies should remain in their tombs for still a little time, until the day of the Last Judgment. Yet for a little time - that is, this time is short in relation to eternity. 1 John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last hour." Then these martyrs will rise again with glorious bodies, and they will receive the second robe, which is the glory of the body. It was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, till their

fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up - that is, until the consummation of the ages, so that all those who must be immolated for the Name of Jesus Christ may be immolated as they were.

§ 3. On the Opening of the Sixth Seal. Chapter 6, Verses 12-17

I. VERSE 12. And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal: and behold there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; and the whole moon became as blood.

At the opening of this sixth seal, the Apostle describes the tenth and last persecution, raised up by Diocletian and Maximian his colleague, in the year of Jesus Christ 303. Saint John makes it the object of a separate seal because it was the cruellest, the longest of the persecutions, and because it was the last. It lasted twelve years, until the empire of Constantine the Great, the conqueror of Maxentius.

The historian Sulpicius describes it in these terms: "Almost the whole earth was watered with the blood of martyrs in this horrible storm. The faithful then sought that glorious death with more eagerness than men now seek bishoprics by deplorable intrigues. Never did any war exhaust the world more; and never also did we win a more brilliant triumph, which consisted in not being able to be conquered in ten years of massacres."

As to the number of victims who fell in this dreadful disaster, if one may judge the remainder of its duration by the picture of a single month, the number of martyrs would undoubtedly rise to an enormous figure. For it is reported in the book of the Roman Pontiffs that, in thirty days alone, as many as 17,000 Christians perished. Far from this fury diminishing afterward, it only increased from day to day through the new edicts which appeared. It is known that in Egypt alone, in the time of Diocletian, 144,000 persons were put to death and 72,000 sent into exile. In all the other provinces the same fury prevailed, except perhaps in those governed by Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine the Great, who, although a pagan, treated his provinces with less severity.

No one could sell or buy until he had burned incense before the idols placed in various localities. There were agents in the islands, in the seaports, and in the villages, to prevent flour or water necessary for life from being supplied to all those who refused to sacrifice to the gods.

Of all the persecutions, the greatest was that in which all the books that could be found were burned, while the Christians were forced to hand them over. Those among them who allowed themselves to be terrified by the atrocity of the tortures and who delivered their books were called traitors. Their number was considerable. But infinitely greater was the number of those who preferred the cruellest death to this betrayal. The Catholic Church celebrates a feast in honour of these latter on the second day of January each year, under this title: "Commemoration at Rome of a great number of holy Martyrs who, despising the edict of the emperor Diocletian by which they were commanded to deliver up the holy canons, preferred to hand over their bodies to the executioners rather than cast holy things to the dogs."

In the midst of so many atrocities, several Christians fled among the barbarians, where they were received with kindness, although they became slaves. Their masters at least allowed them to practise their religion freely.

Since the emperors had resolved to make the Christian religion disappear completely, they believed they ought to begin with their own soldiers, for fear that, when their edicts were carried out throughout the empire, armed Christians might be found to resist them. It was on

this occasion that the whole Theban Legion, commanded by Saint Maurice, was massacred by the soldiers of the emperor. On one Christmas night, 20,000 Christians were burned in their churches.

Among these holy martyrs are named Saint Marcellinus, Pope; Saint Sebastian; Serena, the wife of Diocletian; and Saints Lucian, Vincent, Christopher, Blaise, Gervasius, Protasius, Cosmas and Damian, Quirinus, Gorgon, Agnes, Lucy, Pantaleon, Boniface, Methodius, Clement, Augranus, Euphemia, George, Barbara, and an infinity of others. Churches were destroyed and reduced to ruins throughout the world. Christians of every rank were massacred, so that in many provinces no trace of the faith of Christ could be found. It was ordered that, on the day of Easter, or of the Resurrection of Our Lord, all Christians should be put to death and their churches devastated.

They even went so far as to have virgins violated, whom they then forced to live in public houses, where they were dragged by force. It was on this occasion that Saint Basil wrote, in his book On Virginity: "In the violence of the persecution, virgins chosen because of their fidelity to the divine Spouse were handed over to impious executioners to serve as their playthings. But these virgins knew how to preserve their virginity, even bodily, assisted as they were by the grace of Him for whom they were so jealous to do so; for He defended them, protected them, and rendered them pure from all stain, repelling all the efforts of their infamous aggressors."

It was also in this persecution that, at Augsburg, Afra, who had been a public sinner, together with her mother Hilaria and three young women, Digna, Eupomia, and Eutropia, as well as all the other persons of both sexes belonging to that household, converted to the faith of Jesus Christ and afterward obtained the crown of martyrdom.

II. VERSE 12. And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal: and behold there was a great earthquake. By this earthquake is understood a deep disturbance, a very great trouble, a state of agitation and convulsion in the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. For in all parts of the Roman Empire, judges and prefects were excited, by the edicts and decrees of Diocletian and Maximian, to the massacre and annihilation of the faithful.

And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair. The sun designates Christ, who is the Sun of justice and the light of truth. He was blackened in His own reputation and in His members, the Christians, who were accused of being poisoners and magicians. And it was said that the masters who had instructed and formed them in these vices were Jesus Christ and the Apostles, together with the other disciples. It was in this way that the Gentiles blackened the Name of Jesus as much as they could.

And the whole moon became as blood. Here the moon signifies the Church. For just as the moon receives its light from the sun, so the Church receives the light of truth from Jesus Christ, who is the Sun of justice. Moreover, as the moon increases and decreases according to the times, so also, under the tyranny of Diocletian and Maximian, the Church became entirely red through the blood of the martyrs. For, as we have said above, innumerable Christians were then immolated like animals in all the regions of the earth.

VERSE 13. And the stars from heaven fell upon the earth, as the fig tree casteth its green figs when it is shaken by a great wind. These stars are eminent persons in the kingdom of Christ who, having been shaken by fear of death and of torture, fell into idolatry. Among them was Pope Marcellinus, although he afterward did penance and courageously suffered martyrdom for the faith of Jesus Christ. Several others also fell. The fury of this persecution was such that the See of Rome was vacant for seven and a half years.

As the fig tree casteth its green figs. Here the Christians are compared to green figs because of their weakness, being exposed to so many cruelties. For just as green figs are the first unripe fruits of the fig tree, and as a great wind easily causes them to fall, so also the Christians who had not yet driven deep roots in the charity of Jesus Christ, and those who were not yet ripe in patience, were detached from the tree of the Church and cast to the ground by the wind of this horrible and stormy persecution.

VERSE 14. And the heaven departed as a book folded up. Here heaven signifies the kingdom and Church of Christ, which were scattered by the wind of this furious storm and cast to the four winds of heaven like the leaves of a torn book. For the See of Saint Peter ceased to exist at Rome, and the Christians were dispersed. Some hid in caves; others took refuge in the mountains; some withdrew into deserts; others sought shelter among the barbarous nations. Likewise, as we have said above, the sacred books from which the Christians drew their doctrine were, by order of the emperor, torn, burned, and destroyed.

And every mountain and the islands were moved out of their places. Here the container must be taken for the contained. For, as has been repeated more than once, the fury of this persecution was such that Christians fled into mountains and almost inaccessible islands, and every possible diligence was used to discover them there, which had not been seen in the other persecutions. And when they were finally found, they were dragged to torture and death. For from what precedes, it is seen that these two emperors had conspired with the whole world to exterminate Christianity entirely.

That is why the Apostle says: And every mountain and the islands were moved out of their places - by this cruel war of Diocletian and Maximian, who subdued and subjected to the Roman Empire almost all kingdoms, principalities, islands, and nations, and even the strongest places of the East and West. They and their colleagues extended the limits of the empire in the East as far as the Indies, in the South as far as Ethiopia, in the North as far as the savage and barbarous nations of the Sarmatians, and in the West as far as the kingdom of Genseric and the British Ocean.

III. VERSE 15. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of mountains. VERSE 16. And they say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. VERSE 17. For the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?

These words express the anguish produced by the tyranny of those times, when all Christians were placed in straits. For, as has been said, they were safe neither in the islands of the nations, nor in the most fortified places, nor in the desert mountains, nor among the barbarians where they had taken refuge; since those tyrants had made themselves masters of all nations, occupied every region, penetrated everywhere in the world, and no country had been able to escape their domination. That is why these miserable faithful were forced to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains.

The kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and every freeman, etc. The Apostle here cites seven classes of men, strong and weak, who were all the object of the tyrant's cruelty. He does this to show the difference between this persecution and the others, in which, for the most part, only prelates, the chiefs of the churches, preachers, or those who exposed themselves voluntarily were persecuted; whereas in this persecution, all men were attacked.

Then, by kings, he designates the sovereign pastor of the Church and the patriarchs. By princes, he indicates the bishops. By tribunes, the other prelates. By the rich, the nobles and the distinguished class among the people. By the strong, the Christian soldiers. By bondmen,

the faithful who had fled among the barbarians and had delivered themselves to them in slavery. Finally, by freemen, all the rest of the Christian people, subjects of the Roman Empire.

And they say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. These words express the desire which the Christians had to die in such anguish. For they were not safe in the caves and rocks of the mountains, where many had taken refuge as in a final asylum. They even had reason to fear being sought there, discovered, betrayed, or denounced, and finally dragged to a horrible death. These miserable persons therefore desired to die and be crushed beneath the rocks rather than see themselves exposed by long and cruel tortures to denying the faith of Jesus Christ, as had unfortunately happened to a great number of their brethren.

And they say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. That is, deliver us from the horrible persecution of Diocletian and Maximian, then seated upon the throne of the Roman Empire.

And hide us... from the wrath of the Lamb. That is, from the wrath of Jesus Christ, whom the Christians believed to be irritated against His Church because He permitted her to be persecuted so long and so cruelly. It was also believed that Diocletian was the Antichrist; that the last day of judgment had come; and that all was over for the Church and the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth, so deplorable was the position of all Christendom.

This is why the text adds: For the great day of their wrath is come. That is, the time of the last persecution which Jesus Christ describes in Saint Matthew 24. This reign of Diocletian is called a great day because of its tyranny, which surpassed all that had been seen until then. This permission of God is expressed by the wrath of the Lamb because Jesus Christ chastises His elect as though He were angry, and He acts in this way to make them expiate their sins and to increase their glory and their reward in heaven. God, in His goodness, permits these temporal chastisements to prevent His faithful from perishing eternally and from being cast with the impious into the torments of hell.

And who shall be able to stand? This is a cry of human weakness. This cry also expresses the difficulty of resisting the tyrant and obtaining the victory of martyrdom, as one sees in the fall of the holy Pope Marcellinus.

CHAPTER 7

The Sealing of the 144,000

Revelation 7:1–17

Section II: On Chapter 7 - Of the Consolation of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant After Past Tribulations

I. VERSE 1. After these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, that they should not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor on any tree.

After having described the persecution of Diocletian, the Apostle speaks of the consolation which was granted to the Church of God in the time of Constantine the Great, son of Helen. This chapter must be considered under two aspects, and contains two parts. First, we see described the consolation granted to the Church militant, as may be observed in verse 2: And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God, etc. Second, this chapter depicts the consolation of the Church triumphant, as follows in verse 9: After this, I saw a great multitude, etc., with palms in their hands.

§ 1. On the Consolation and Deliverance of the Church Militant from the Yoke and Persecutions of Tyrants. Chapter 7, Verses 1-8

I. VERSE 1. After these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, that they should not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor on any tree. These words allow us to glimpse a short continuation of the preceding persecution, through the four emperors who then reigned in the four parts of the Roman Empire: Galerius, Maxentius, Maximinus, and Licinius.

This is why the Apostle says: After these things - that is, after the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian, who laid down the reins of the empire - I saw four angels; that is, the four emperors and persecutors of the Church named above, standing, dominating or reigning, on the four corners of the earth, in the four parts of the Roman Empire, which extended almost to the ends of the world. I saw them holding the four winds, that they should not blow upon the earth - that is, preventing all the doctors of the Church from preaching the Gospel and the word of God.

This wind is spoken of in the Canticle of Canticles 4:16: "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow." For just as the earth is made fruitful by the winds, so the garden of the Church militant is made fruitful by the breath of preaching. I saw them holding the four winds, that they should not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor on any tree. Here the Apostle takes the container for the contained. For some of the Christians dwelt in deserts, others in islands, and others, finally, in forests, for fear of persecution. Now all these places are designated by these words: sea, earth, and trees.

II. VERSE 2. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun. Saint John now describes the repression of these four tyrants by the Emperor Constantine the Great, in the year of Christ 312. And I saw another angel - that is, an angel opposed to the first ones. This was Constantine the Great, who ascended from the rising of the sun - who rose to the empire by the disposition of Christ, who is the Sun of justice, in order to restore peace to the Church.

For while Maxentius, who had killed Severus, was exercising his tyranny at Rome, the nobility called Constantine, son of Constantius Chlorus, then governor in Gaul, to deliver the city from the servitude of Maxentius. This angel who ascended from the rising of the sun had the sign of the living God - that is, the sign of Christ.

It is indeed related in ecclesiastical history, Book IX, that Constantine, coming to Rome to oppose the tyranny of Maxentius, often meditated on what measures he should take in this war; and although he had not yet received Baptism, he nevertheless prayed to God to obtain victory. Then, lifting his eyes toward heaven, he saw the standard of the Cross shining in the air. And as this extraordinary vision struck him with astonishment, he heard the angels surrounding the Cross say to him: "By this sign thou shalt conquer." From that moment, being assured that he would obtain victory, he had the sign of the Cross placed upon the standards of his soldiers, just as it had appeared to him; and advancing in this way against Maxentius, he conquered him, defeated him, and remained triumphant.

VERSE 3. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. These words describe the power, great piety, and burning zeal of Constantine the Great for the Christian religion.

And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels - that is, to those four persecutors and their ministers established in the four parts of the empire. He ordered them, and all the subjects of the empire, to close the temples of paganism and to renounce idols, in order to embrace the faith of the Christians. Moreover, he ordered churches to be built throughout the whole earth. He himself caused to be built at Rome the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, together with several other sacred buildings which he adorned at great expense and filled with immense riches.

He enacted laws against the worship of idols, silenced the false oracles, prevented the erection of new images, and put an end to secret sacrifices. He forbade gladiatorial combats in the cities, no longer allowing them to be further defiled by human blood. The adoration of the Nile by effeminate men was no longer tolerated. This is why he forbade the putting to death of hermaphrodites as guilty of adultery. He also gave laws to the governors of the provinces for the sanctification of Sunday and for the honouring of the feasts of the martyrs.

He reserved certain rights in all the cities concerning the tribute they had to pay, and assigned the revenues from these rights to the churches and clergy of each place, assuring their possession of them in perpetuity. The decision of difficulties raised by civil tribunals against the Church was devolved to the bishops, and he willed that their sentences should have the force of law. He also gave the bishops full jurisdiction over their clerics, established ecclesiastical immunities everywhere, favoured letters and learning, instituted several schools, and founded libraries. He granted many privileges and immunities to professors, and endowed their chairs with considerable revenues.

It was in this way that this emperor cried with a loud voice, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees - by preventing and ruining the faith and religion of Christ. And it was in this way that he restrained the power of the four tyrants and of their ministers, so that it was no longer possible for them to harm Christians. For he fought against Maxentius and killed him. Licinius, who cruelly mistreated the faithful at Alexandria and in Egypt, suffered

the same fate; and the two other tyrants had to yield to his power.

Thus, as much as the Church of Jesus Christ had previously been in abjection, desolation, and adversity, so much was she honoured, exalted, and consoled by the great Constantine, a prince as pious as he was powerful, whose reign lasted thirty-three years.

Hurt not the earth, etc., till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. These words signify the public practice of holy Baptism, which Constantine himself received from Saint Sylvester, and which he introduced throughout the empire by his decrees as much as by his example. Finally, he relegated to hell and completely ruined the idols, defiled by so many horrors and falsehoods.

It must be observed here that these words, till we sign, cited in the text, must not be taken in a restricted sense, but in an unlimited one, as when one says: "This man did not repent as long as he lived," by which one understands that he died without doing penance, since one can no longer repent after death. Thus this passage, till we sign in their foreheads, etc., must be understood in this sense: that these four tyrants were never again to harm the Christians.

III. VERSE 4. And I heard the number of them that were signed: a hundred forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel. Here one sees the result of this repression of the tyrants, which was the multiplication of Christians under the reign of Constantine the Great.

And I heard, in imagination and in spirit, the number of them that were signed - that is, the number of the baptised and of the believers - was a hundred forty-four thousand. The Apostle cites a determined number for an undetermined number, as often occurs in Holy Scripture. For the number of baptisms throughout the empire far surpassed this figure at that period of the Church.

Of every tribe of the children of Israel. The name of Israel now belongs, in its true sense, to all the nations regenerated in Jesus Christ by Baptism, according to these words of Osee 2:24: "And I will say to that which was not my people: Thou art my people." One may also cite here another passage, from Isaiah 44:3: "I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy stock. And they shall spring up among the herbs, as willows beside the running waters. One shall say: I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand: To the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Now this passage applies to the nations converted to Jesus Christ.

Likewise the Apostle says in Romans 2:28-29: "For it is not he is a Jew, who is so outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outwardly in the flesh: But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly," by the faith of Jesus Christ and by the spiritual circumcision of the heart.

Of the tribe of Juda were twelve thousand signed. In consequence of what has just been said, one must understand literally by these twelve tribes the twelve Apostles of the New Testament, who correspond to and are assimilated to the twelve patriarchs of the Old. For just as, through the patriarchs, all the generations of Israel descend from Jacob according to the flesh, so also, through the Apostles, all the generations of Christians descend from Jesus Christ according to the second promise and according to the spirit. And in place of the tribe of Dan, of whom it is said that Antichrist will be born, the Apostle here places the tribe of Joseph, just as Saint Matthias obtained the place of Judas the prevaricator.

§ 2. On the Consolation of the Church Triumphant After Past Tribulations, and on the Victories Won by the Holy Martyrs in the Persecutions. Chapter 7, Verses 9-17

VERSE 9. After this, I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, etc. In these words and those which follow, the Apostle describes and reveals the blessed state of all the holy martyrs existing in the Church triumphant, who, in the time of Diocletian and of the tyrants who preceded him, passed to eternal life through many tribulations and through a cruel death. The purpose which Saint John proposes in this description is to strengthen and console the Christian soldiers who will still have to suffer, until the consummation of the ages, for the faith, for justice, and for the glory of God in the Church militant.

After this: these two words must be understood according to the order of the things revealed. I saw a great multitude of martyrs and saints who, in the first three centuries of the Church, came to heavenly glory. Which no man could number. The Apostle does not determine the number of these martyrs, in order to make us understand that it was immense, as is seen from what has been said above.

Of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues. He cites these four different kinds of multitudes in order to say that a crowd of men from all the nations which are upon the earth, in the four parts of the world, came by martyrdom to eternal life; and also to make us understand that no class of men is excluded from heavenly glory.

I saw this multitude standing before the throne. These words express the state of these saints who enjoy the beatific vision of God and the stability of eternal rest. And before the Lamb - that is, enjoying the presence of the humanity of Jesus Christ, whom they will be able to contemplate according to the full extent of their desires. They will moreover be clothed with white robes, etc.; that is, enriched with the glory, rewards, and special aureoles proportioned to their battles, their labours, and their merits. Finally, they will be standing before the throne... with palms in their hands, as a sign of their complete victory - a victory which can never be complete in the present life, since even the greatest saints always have to fight here below, whatever their state may be. One sees, therefore, from what has just been said, that in this description there can be question only of the state of the Church triumphant in heaven.

VERSE 10. And they cried with a loud voice. These words indicate the particular office of the saints in heaven, at the same time as the vehemence and ardour of the love with which they praise and glorify God and the Lamb, out of gratitude for their salvation, of which they are assured for all eternity, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. That is, salvation, felicity, and all the goods which they enjoy come to them from God and from the Lamb.

II. VERSE 11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures; and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God. There follows a general applause of all the holy angels concerning the salvation of these glorious martyrs. And all the angels stood, ready to execute every divine will, round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures.

These angels of the Church triumphant form three hierarchies, divided into nine choirs. They stood around the throne of God, and around the ancients - that is, the Prophets and the Apostles - and around the four living creatures, the four Evangelists and the Doctors, where they are continually ready to serve God their Creator, as the expression stood indicates. They fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God. These words express the most perfect submission, the respect, and the humility with which these angelic spirits adore,

throughout all eternity, Jesus Christ, true God and man together, rendering Him all praise and all glory for the state of their beatitude, and expressing to Him their gratitude for the triumph of the holy martyrs, saying: Amen.

VERSE 12. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God, for ever and ever. Amen. This means that these angels bless God, praise Him, and glorify His strength, His Name, and His wisdom, with regard to His eternal attributes. They render Him thanksgiving for the tribulations which these holy martyrs endured, and which procured for them so great a glory.

Honour, in the public churches and upon the altars which were built throughout the universe after the last persecution of Diocletian. Power, by the miracles wrought in testimony of the faith. Strength, in the resistance to tyrants and persecutors of the Church. Finally, the admirable constancy of the holy martyrs, whose almost infinite multitude of both sexes triumphed over all torments and reached the heavenly kingdom. Now these holy angels declare that all these advantages must be attributed to the Lord, the unique source and ocean of all goods. Then they end with the word Amen - "So be it" - to express their ardent desire that it be accomplished in this way.

III. VERSE 13. And one of the ancients answered, and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? It is with the greatest wisdom that one of the ancients here asks a question concerning these persons: who they are, and how they came to the state of beatitude. He asks this question for the consolation, joy, and hope of the just amid all the adversities which they will have to suffer on earth from the impious, by the permission of God. He asks it also to make us understand that martyrdom and the death of the just do not turn to their shame, but are, on the contrary, the passage to a state which is the union of every good and every glory.

Wisdom 3:1: "But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure was taken for misery, and their going away from us, for utter destruction: but they are in peace." This is what the impious will themselves be forced to confess and deplore at the Last Judgment, to their eternal shame; but it will be too late.

Wisdom 5:1: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation." "They shall say within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."

And one of the ancients answered, and said to me, etc. This ancient is Saint Peter, the first among the prelates of the Church. These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they?

VERSE 14. And I said to him: My Lord, thou knowest. Saint John immediately receives from Eternal Truth an answer full of instruction for us. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation. That is, these are they who were the reproach of men upon earth, and who endured every kind of torment: wheels, fire, beasts, the sword, prison, and exile. They are also those who went out of this world by martyrdom in the times of the terrible tribulations of Diocletian, Maximian, and the other tyrants their predecessors.

And have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These words express the aureole of martyrdom which was granted to them because of the

testimony they bore to the faith of Jesus Christ. For the blood of the martyrs is taken morally for the blood of the Lamb, because this blood is that of His members, in whom He suffers persecution, as He Himself says in Acts 9:4: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It is also said that they washed and made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, because all the merit and death of the saints are founded on the merits, death, and blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, in whom they are rooted, as the palm is in the vine, and to whom they are united as the fruit to the tree and as the plant to the seed.

VERSE 15. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night, etc. Here follows the worthy and full reward granted to them in proportion to their tribulations, expressed by these words: Therefore. These words also specify the eight beatitudes corresponding to the eight degrees of virtues difficult to attain, and to the eight principal victories which Christians must win in order to reach the heavenly kingdom. These are the eight rewards or beatitudes which Jesus Christ promised to His soldiers in Saint Matthew 5. This number eight also designates the universality and fullness of all the goods of heaven, as we shall see.

IV. The first degree of Christian virtues is poverty of spirit, with which the Christian must be armed, so as to be disposed to lose all temporal goods rather than deny the faith. He must also be disposed, in persecution, to distribute his goods to the poor, as Saint Lawrence and all the other martyrs did when tyrants persecuted the faithful in their temporal possessions. Now to this generous sacrifice of all temporal goods, Jesus Christ promises the kingdom of heaven, which is eternal stability in glory and happiness. For this reason Saint John adds here: Therefore they are before the throne of God, for eternity, and see Him face to face as He is.

The second degree is meekness, gentleness, and patience, with which the holy martyrs bore the yoke and endured the tyranny of the kings of the earth, after the example of Jesus Christ their Master. They allowed themselves to be immolated like lambs, without complaint, thus overcoming evil by good. Now it is in reward for this virtue that the second beatitude is promised to them. It consists in the possession of the earth - that is, in perfect liberty and in the eternal enjoyment of the sovereign good. For they will reign with Jesus Christ their Head for ever and ever, as they reign with Him upon earth, since to serve God is to reign.

This is why Saint John adds: And they serve him day and night in his temple - that is, they serve Him day and night in eternal rest, liberty, and felicity, praising their Creator, never again having anything to fear. Psalm 83:5: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever." By the temple is here understood the empyrean, the palace of the eternal King, the incorruptible tabernacle in which God dwells with the saints and with the angels, as we shall see in chapter 21.

The third degree is the tears of the just and their groanings in adversities, instability, torments, temptations, and the innumerable miseries and calamities of this world. But, in return, there is promised to them a full consolation and a perfect felicity, which will consist in being with Jesus Christ and reigning with this Monarch, infinitely just, holy, and powerful, whose goodness, power, and kingdom will remain fixed and immutable throughout all eternity. This is why Saint John says: And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. For they will no longer be subject to any earthly king in order to serve him, and their blessed state will no longer change for ever and ever. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, whose yoke is sweet and whose burden is light, will be their King. He will reign over them throughout all eternity, and they will no longer be able to be separated from Him.

The fourth degree is zeal for justice, to which is promised the perfect satisfaction of every desire and the fullness of all goods. For the just and the saints of God upon earth, seeing that

this world is filled with evils, experience such affliction of spirit at being unable to remedy them that it may be compared to the burning of hunger and thirst. What great pain do they not suffer, in fact, when they consider the oppression of the poor, of wards and widows, and when they see the impious prevail over the just! They are witnesses of the folly of the wicked and of the contempt shown toward the wise. It is with sorrow that they contemplate all the good which is prevented from being realised: so many souls that perish, so many wars and unjust lawsuits; finally, they see themselves forced to recognise, without being able to remedy it, that there is neither justice, nor truth, nor fear of God, nor charity, nor good faith among most men.

Now it is to these just ones that Saint John applies these consoling words: VERSE 16. They shall no more hunger nor thirst. For they will be fully satisfied and filled in all their desires, knowing from above the decrees of the divine will. Psalm 16:15: "But as for me, I will appear before thy sight in justice: I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." These just ones will then no longer be subject to bodily infirmities throughout all eternity.

The fifth degree of Christian virtues is to be merciful: loving the poor, the miserable, the afflicted, widows, and orphans; helping the needy; and showing oneself gentle, affable, beneficent, and compassionate toward one's neighbour in the charity of Jesus Christ. It is in reward for this virtue that the Apostle promises to those who have practised it the mercy of God, which will preserve them from the pains of hell and reassure them against every tribulation for ever and ever. For he adds: Neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. That is, Jesus Christ, the Sun of justice, will torment in hell only the impious, the tyrants, and men without mercy; and none of the great and numerous tribulations of this age will trouble those who have shown mercy.

The sixth degree is a holy, immaculate, chaste, sober, and pious life in this world. This virtue will be rewarded by the eternal vision of God in His kingdom, into which nothing defiled can enter.

VERSE 17. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them. By the Lamb one understands here the humanity of Christ, in which and through which, as in a burning light, the blessed will eternally contemplate the splendour of the Divinity. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne - that is, of heaven, according to Matthew 5, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ will manifest Himself glorious and admirable to all the saints. The Lamb... shall rule them, because it is through the humanity of Christ, placed between the Divinity and creatures, that the blessed will enjoy the beatific vision; and also because the just will be directed by the ineffable will of Jesus Christ, upon whom they will depend absolutely.

And the Lord will no longer permit them to be able to wander or to sin throughout all eternity. But they will remain perfectly united to their Creator in perfect rest, and will be, as it were, absorbed in Him in an ineffable manner. Now it is through the help of the humanity of Christ that they will eternally enjoy this infinite happiness. Therefore they will no longer have to fear losing the beatific vision, which they will enjoy with an ever-new delight, since there is nothing beyond it that one can possess.

The seventh degree is a certain liberty and holy peace upon the earth, by means of which the just rule over their evil affections and contain their passions in calm and subjection. From this they remain unshaken in calamities, adversities, and persecutions, never losing the calm and peace of the heart, and resting in God upon the testimony of their good conscience. The Apostle promises to these the divine sonship, by which the desires of the saints will be fully accomplished and satisfied, since there is nothing greater that they can possess, nothing more worthy that they can desire, nothing sweeter that they can enjoy, nothing more admirable that they can contemplate, than their God with all His perfections.

And he shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life. That is, to immortality and to the fullness of all goods and all possible desires. It is to express this variety and multiplicity of goods that Saint John speaks in the plural: He shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life. Consequently, we shall obtain this fullness of happiness and this divine sonship after the universal resurrection of bodies, when we shall be called the sons of God, and when we shall see our Creator face to face and as He is.

The eighth degree of virtues, finally, is to suffer persecutions, adversities, chains, prison, the loss of temporal goods, and even death itself, with patience and humility, for justice and for the faith of Jesus Christ. It is of this last degree that Saint John says: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. That is, God will no longer permit against them any cause of affliction, but will grant them full and perfect consolation. As much as they suffered, so much will they be consoled. Thus none of them will complain of his past tribulations and adversities, since he will enjoy the eternal goods which those sufferings procured for him, in proportion to the evils he endured and the sacrifices he had to make.

End of Book Three

CHAPTER 8

The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets

Revelation 8:1–13

Book Four: On Chapters Eight and Nine - Of the Opening of the Seventh Seal, and of the Six First Angels Who Sounded the Trumpet

Section I: On Chapter 8 - Of the Four First Angels Who Sounded the Trumpet

§ 1. On the Opening of the Seventh Seal. Chapter 8, Verses 1-6

I. In the opening of the first six seals, we have seen the war of the Church against the Jews and the Gentiles. Now, at the opening of the seventh seal, there remains to be described the struggle of this same Church against the principal heresiarchs and their supporters, who are all included under this seventh seal until the consummation of the ages. It is also under this last seal that the persecution of Julian the Apostate and of his followers is designated - a persecution which was of short duration and which followed the reign of Constantine the Great.

VERSE 1. And when the Lamb had opened the seventh seal. That is, when Our Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to Saint John the last persecutions which He would still permit against His Church until the end of the world.

There was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour. This silence announces a new affliction which the Church did in fact have to undergo from Julian the Apostate. But since this persecution lasted only a short time, and since this tyrant was soon carried away by death, the text says: There was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour. A kind of silence occurs among a people when everyone is under the impression of terror, fear, and astonishment at the approach of new calamities. This is what happened, in fact, to the Church of Jesus Christ in the time of the emperor Julian. There was silence in heaven - that is, in the Church.

Julian had professed the true faith for twenty years, although during the last ten years of his life the religion which he affected to profess outwardly was only an infamous hypocrisy, the fruit of the fear which Constantius inspired in him. Thus, scarcely had he ascended the throne when, delivered from this restraint, he solemnly denied the faith of Jesus Christ. Not content with this, he had himself consecrated sovereign pontiff by impure rites, as we see in a Roman hymn composed by the priest Prudentius.

He ordered the temples of the gods to be reopened in order that victims might be offered to them. He also became pontiff of the sacrifices of Eleusis. Finally, he made great efforts to rebuild, in favour of the Jews, the temple of Jerusalem which Titus had ruined during the siege of that city. On the other hand, Julian had the churches of the Christians closed and

forbade them the public sacrifice of the Mass. It was in this way that there was silence for about half an hour in the Church.

But God did not long tolerate this infamous persecutor; for in the year of Jesus Christ 363, after a reign of a year and a half, Julian received a wound in the war against the Persians, from which he died. It is therefore very fittingly said in the text that this silence lasted only half an hour. For after his death, the churches of the Christians were reopened, the temples of the idols were closed again, and the religion of Jesus Christ once more began to enjoy its joy and rest under the emperors Jovian and Valentinian, his successors, and under the sovereign Pontiff Saint Damasus.

II. VERSE 2. And I saw seven angels standing before the face of God; and there were given to them seven trumpets. Mention will be made later of these seven angels and their trumpets.

VERSE 3. And another angel came, and stood before the altar. This other angel is Saint Damasus, who was elected pope. He is called another because he was the opposite of the preceding ones. He is announced among the other angels of whom there is question here, because, in fact, some of them preceded him; but the greater number came after him. They are all represented together before the throne, receiving trumpets there. But the angels who followed the one spoken of here - that is, Saint Damasus - followed him only in this sense: that they sounded their trumpets after him.

This is why this pope, or this angel, is first spoken of: And another angel came - Saint Damasus, who was elected pope, though he was not immediately accepted. And he stood before the altar. That is, after Saint Damasus had been elected pope, he was confirmed and established in his pontificate.

It must be known that at his election, which took place in the basilica of Licinius, he had as competitor the deacon Ursicinus; and that several persons of the two parties formed on this occasion were killed in that church, where men were not content to fight by votes, but even had recourse to armed force. Despite this disturbance, Damasus was confirmed by the consent of the clergy and the people, and Ursicinus was assigned to the Church of Naples.

It is therefore deliberately that the Apostle expresses this circumstance in this way: And another angel came, and stood before the altar. That is, another pontiff came, who truly governed the Church of God, here perfectly represented by the altar. For it is upon the altar that Jesus Christ is immolated and offered each day in the holy sacrifice of the Mass - an unbloody and propitiatory sacrifice, accepted each day from the hand of the priest by the heavenly Father.

And another angel came... having a golden censer. That is, another pontiff of great piety, wisdom, and charity; for these three virtues are metaphorically represented by the golden censer, by the fire which is within it, and by the smoke which comes out of it. Now this pope excelled in these three virtues.

He was the first who confirmed by his authority the Holy Bible translated by Saint Jerome; and he caused the symbol of Constantinople to replace the Nicene Creed in the Mass. He established collegiate churches, built churches, and greatly beautified divine worship. Moreover, he ordered the chanting of the Psalms in two choirs in all the churches, and he caused the Gloria Patri, etc., to be placed at the end of each psalm.

And there was given to him much incense. There now follows the fruit of this pontiff's wisdom in divine worship, which he greatly enlarged, and in the religion which he caused to flourish throughout the whole Church. And there was given to him much incense. This incense is the increase and fervour of prayer which he spread among the servants of God. Psalm 140:2: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight." It is said that this incense was given to him so

that he might use it, by his authority, to restore and propagate divine worship, which the impious Julian had destroyed, and to render homage to God by means of it.

That he should offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. These words show the office of the sovereign Pontiff, which is to extend and preserve divine worship by himself and by all the inferior ministers, and to refer the devotion of the Christian people to the glory of God. That he should offer, etc., upon the golden altar - that is, upon the Humanity of Jesus Christ, or the Lamb who is in the presence of the throne. For it is in Him and through Him that all our prayers and merits are presented to God. Indeed, it is upon Jesus Christ that our prayers and merits are founded; it is through Jesus Christ that the Father accepts them as pleasing; and without Jesus Christ these merits and prayers would have no value for eternal life.

VERSE 4. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel. That is, this perfection of sacred worship pleased the Divine Majesty extraordinarily, because this worship was the fruit of the labour, industry, wisdom, and devotion of this holy Pontiff, who here represents the moral person of the universal Church.

VERSE 5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it on the earth: and there were thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and a great earthquake. There follows another great and good work which was accomplished under this holy Pontiff: namely, the ecumenical Council of Constantinople, in which one hundred and fifty Fathers of the Church decreed the dogma of the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the impious Macedonius and his adherents, who denied it, as Arius had previously dared to deny it in the Second Person.

This is why the Apostle Saint John says here: And the angel took the censer. The angel - that is, Saint Damasus - took the censer of anathema in order to have the impious Macedonius condemned and delivered to Satan by the general Council of Constantinople, which was unanimous. This unanimity is represented by the censer, because all hearts and all minds were gathered there as into one vessel containing the fire of charity.

He filled it with the fire of the altar. That is, with the divinity of the Holy Spirit, which is designated by fire. It is said that this angel filled the censer with the fire of the altar because it was with the universal consent of the whole Church, represented by the altar, that this pope, as supreme head and judge of controversies in matters of faith, declared this truth of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

And he cast it on the earth. That is, by defining from the height of the apostolic chair, and by publishing throughout the whole earth against Macedonius and his followers, that the Holy Spirit is God Himself.

And there were thunders. That is, excommunications. And voices. That is, declarations of faith concerning the Holy Spirit. And lightnings. That is, threats of excommunication against anyone who should dare, in the future, to teach or believe anything contrary to this dogma. And a great earthquake. That is, a great alteration and commotion of minds in these circumstances.

The angel cast the censer upon the earth - that is, against the Macedonians, earthly spirits whose souls knew how to conceive only servile thoughts concerning the Holy Spirit. And there were thunders. That is, holy preachings on this dogma of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. And voices. That is, divine voices or praises concerning His divinity. And lightnings. That is, brilliant miracles wrought by His power. And a great earthquake. For by this the hearts of men were moved and disposed to conceive just thoughts concerning the divinity of the Holy

Spirit.

VERSE 6. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound the trumpet. We shall see, in the following paragraph, who these seven angels are with their trumpets.

§ 2. On the Two First Angels Who Sounded the Trumpet. Chapter 8, Verses 7-9

I. By the four angels sounding the trumpet, who form the subject of the two following paragraphs, are understood the heresiarchs who, after the defeat of the Jews and Gentiles, began a new war against the Church of Jesus Christ. They attacked the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity; the Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; the Humanity, Person, Nature, and Will of the Incarnate Word, and so forth. These four heresiarchs represent the universality of all the other heretics, nearly all of whom drew their origin from these four principal ones and founded their errors upon their false doctrine.

This number four is chosen deliberately, by similitude with the number of the living creatures, or of the four Evangelists. For just as truth had to be preached in the four parts of the world and sown like good seed by the four Evangelists, so God permitted error, or cockle, also to be spread by these four angels representing all heretics.

1. The devil, that ancient enemy of the human race, the father of heretics and liars, strives to imitate what Jesus Christ does for the salvation of men, by acts similar in outward form, but which in reality tend directly to the destruction of all truth and all good. 2. One sounds the trumpet when one wishes to make war and prepare for combat, or again when one wishes to promulgate a decree. Now the first of these acts belongs to the three last angels, and the second belongs to the heresiarchs who, swollen with pride, spread throughout the whole world, at different periods, their impure dogmas and their errors.

VERSE 7. The first angel sounded the trumpet. This first angel was Arius, priest of Alexandria, who, in the year of Jesus Christ 315, under Alexander, bishop of that city, and under the emperor Constantine the Great and Pope Saint Sylvester, dared to teach that Jesus Christ is similar to the Father only in name, but that He does not have the same substance as Him.

It was against this heresy that the first Council of Nicaea was convoked, one of the four principal councils of that time, to which 318 Catholic bishops subscribed. Arius, Photinus, and Sabellius were condemned there. Although Arius appeared before Julian the Apostate and Pope Saint Damasus, the text speaks of him in the second place because it was only after these that his doctrine spread and developed to such a degree that the Church groaned under it, and that the Roman Breviary, on the feast of Saint Damasus celebrated on 11 December, says that the universe was astonished to see itself Arian.

And there fell upon the earth hail and fire mingled with blood; and the third part of the earth and of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was consumed. Here follow the storms, struggles, and immense damage which Christianity had to suffer at the sound of this trumpet. There fell upon the earth hail. These words announce a very stormy tempest, which in ordinary language is called hail. This tempest did indeed ruin and divide the kingdom of Christ at that time.

We read in ecclesiastical history, Book 10: "By this tempest the face of the Church became livid and horrible. For she was no longer, as before, fought by foreign enemies; but she saw herself ravaged by wars and internal dissensions. The faithful anathematised one another, and all claimed to be in the bosom of truth."

The property of hail is to devastate harvests, vineyards, and the most flourishing fields, and to destroy flowers, trees, and fruits, leaving after it traces of ruin. Such was the terrible consequence of the heresy of Arius, which, in a certain sense, annihilated all the splendour that the great Constantine had given to the Church of Christ.

There fell upon the earth hail and fire mingled with blood. That is, the fire of jealousy and the hail of dissensions, which caused blood to flow, especially under the emperor Valens. For this emperor, having fallen into this frightful heresy, persecuted the Catholics: sometimes causing them to be burned, and sometimes massacring them by the sword or by other new kinds of torments. There fell upon the earth, etc., because almost the whole universe was infected by this poison, which penetrated everywhere and exercised its malignant influence all the longer because it pleased almost all men.

And the third part of the earth and of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was consumed. These words denote the general fall of Christians in that age, and the considerable decrease of the true Church. For Saint John speaks here of the third part of Christianity which defected: that is, the third part of the laity, or of the people, whom he designates by the word earth, because this portion of the kingdom of Christ was entirely absorbed in earthly and worldly things.

The Apostle also speaks of the third part of the clergy, whom he designates by trees, because priests ought to be higher than the simple faithful in the knowledge of Holy Scripture and in the practice of heavenly things. Moreover, ecclesiastics are like trees which ought to bear supernatural fruits in their season by their life and morals; and they ought to produce leaves and fruits by their good example. Now the third part of these trees perished, since, according to the report of Saint Hilary, 105 bishops were infected with the Arian error.

And all the grass was consumed. Saint John here specially designates the Goths, who may be considered as green grass, because, preparing to embrace Christianity, they asked priests from the emperor Valens to instruct them in the mysteries and sacraments of the Catholic faith. But this heretical prince, on the contrary, sent them Arian ministers who corrupted them - an infamous perfidy which undoubtedly deserves to be chastised with a very special fury by its own victims, in the avenging flames of eternity. This happened in the year of Christ 378.

II. VERSE 8. And the second angel sounded the trumpet. This second angel was Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, who caused his blasphemies against the Holy Spirit to resound, representing Him as a mere creature and as the servant of the Son. This occurred in the year of the Lord 360. It was against this new error that the ecumenical Council of Constantinople assembled, the second of the general councils of that time, to which 150 bishops subscribed, under Gratian and the emperor Theodosius, and under Pope Saint Damasus, in the year 381.

And there fell into the sea, as it were a great mountain burning with fire. This heresiarch is compared to a great burning mountain because of his pride, ambition, and abominable arrogance, applauding himself in his error. For unlike Arius, he did not deny the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit together, but denied only the divinity of the Holy Spirit, saying that He is not consubstantial with the Father.

This impious man is represented as a burning fire because, having been rejected from his episcopal see, he sparkled and burned with envy, anger, and rage. And after being forced to retire as a private individual to a secret place called the Cloisters, near Constantinople, he did not cease to vomit from his impure mouth the fires of his blasphemies against the Holy Spirit.

And it fell into the sea. 1. Here, by the sea, is understood the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which is impenetrable to the eyes of human intelligence, as the depths of the sea are to our eyes - and infinitely more so. Moreover, just as the waters which water the earth come out of the sea and return to it, so all natural and supernatural goods proceed from God, one in three Persons, and must return to that same principle from which they flow.

2. The sea here also represents the Holy Spirit Himself. For just as the sea gives life and prosperity to all the creatures that are found in it, and without which they could not subsist, so the Holy Spirit is that vivifying sea in which we have all received the life of the soul in Baptism. It is by Him that we live; for if we were not watered by His waters, the waters of grace, we would soon die.

3. By the sea one further understands the Church, because of Baptism, which may be considered as the sea; for just as the sea is the receptacle of all waters, so the Church receives and gathers all the faithful by Baptism. 4. The sea also represents the world, which is indeed like a sea, changeable and agitated by the waves of temptations and adversities, and which contains the good mingled with the wicked, as the sea contains good and bad fish. Now this comparison of the sea, in all the meanings and acceptations just cited, applies perfectly to this great burning mountain fallen into the sea of which Saint John speaks. It is enough to consider the matter attentively to be convinced of it.

And the third part of the sea became blood. 1. Blood here figuratively represents the upheaval which was manifested outwardly by this heresy concerning belief in the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Trinity, and concerning the Church. 2. This blood must also be understood in its proper meaning; for this heresy of Macedonius, like that of Arius, caused much blood to be shed in the world, as is seen from ecclesiastical history.

VERSE 9. And the third part of those creatures died which had life in the sea. That is, the third part of Christians lost the life of the soul which they had previously possessed by true faith and by charity in the Holy Spirit, when they still belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ, in which alone one can have life. Thus all those who abandoned the Church to adhere to the perfidy of this new heresy immediately perished. For as there are few fish which can live outside the sea, so there are few souls - and even far fewer - which can live and be saved outside the true Church of Jesus Christ. The third part is expressed here in a determined manner, but must be understood in an indeterminate sense. It signifies, in reality, a great and notable part of Christianity.

And the third part of the ships was destroyed. That is, a considerable number of prelates and pastors of souls were infected with this heresy, although they should have guided the faithful into the secure harbour of salvation.

§ 3. On the Third and Fourth Angel. Chapter 8, Verses 10-13

I. VERSE 10. The third angel sounded the trumpet. This third angel was the heresiarch Pelagius, who had for his disciple and imitator his contemporary Celestius. Both of them were monks. They propagated their errors in the time of the emperors Honorius and Arcadius, and under the pontificate of Innocent I and of Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo. It was on this occasion that the Church celebrated the Council of Milan, which condemned them in the year of Jesus Christ 416. The general Council of Ephesus was also assembled at that time against Nestorius. Pelagius infected Syria and the British Isles, his homeland, with his heresy; and his followers acted in the same way in other countries.

Pelagius, supposing that free will must be placed before divine grace, taught: 1. That it is not by the mercy of God, because of Jesus Christ, and without merit on our part, that man is justified; but that it is by his own virtues and by his natural good works that he can procure for himself true and solid justice before God; and that it is not by the faith of Jesus Christ, but by our own strength, that we can obtain the remission of our sins. 2. That the death of Adam was not a punishment for sin, but a consequence of the conditions of nature. 3. That Baptism is not necessary for children, because he denied the existence of original sin. 4. That the just are exempt from sins already in this world, because man, once he has become just, can no longer sin. 5. That once man has received the grace of Baptism, he can no longer abuse his free will and can no longer commit sin. 6. Finally, that the prayers of the Church for the conversion of unbelievers and sinners, or for the perseverance of the just, are useless, and that free will is sufficient for all things.

Now it is of this heresiarch that the Apostle says in his Apocalypse: The third angel sounded the trumpet. That is, Pelagius began in this way to promulgate his abominable errors.

And a great star, burning like a torch, fell from heaven. This star was Celestius, his disciple and imitator, who, at the sound of his master's trumpet, fell from the Church militant into heresy. He is called a great star because he was a learned man and a religious, two qualities which gave his doctrine an appearance of truth. This is why the Apostle says of this star that it was burning like a torch.

By these words he expresses the power of this heresiarch. For by the brilliance of his learning, and under the habit of a religious, he knew how to give to his false doctrine such an appearance of truth and holiness that he infected and seduced a great number of men. He is called burning because he was a fierce enemy and a formidable adversary of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

And it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. The rivers and fountains are a metaphor which Saint John uses to express Baptism and the graces which the Holy Spirit grants to the just in this life. Now these are rivers and fountains of grace, of which this heresiarch poisoned the third part, by drying up these sources for a considerable number of the faithful who ceased to believe in them and to draw from them.

VERSE 11. And the name of the star was Wormwood. These words express the property of this heresy, which consisted in making the grace of the Holy Spirit bitter, odious, and insipid to men. For just as sweet water is pleasant and desirable to those who thirst, so the grace of the Holy Spirit and Baptism are desirable to sinners when they have faith in Jesus Christ. But this demon cast the wormwood of his infamous heresy upon these waters, and made them bitter to men, whom he filled with presumption in their own strength and in their own free will; whereas without the grace of God, the practice of good works is by its nature bitter as wormwood, especially since original sin.

And the third part of the waters was changed into wormwood. That is, a great and notable part of the believers was infected and corrupted by this impiety. And many men died because of the waters, because they were made bitter. By men, the Apostle designates the prudent and the wise of the age, who died the death of the soul because of the waters - that is, because of these perverse doctrines concerning grace and Baptism. For these waters were bitter in appearance and in the esteem and false belief of men who considered them so; whereas, on the contrary, they were filled with the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the thirsty soul of the sinner by the waters of His grace.

II. VERSE 12. And the fourth angel sounded the trumpet. This fourth angel was the heresiarch Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who appeared under Theodosius the Younger and Pope Celestine, in the year of Christ 428. On this occasion the general Council of

Ephesus was convoked, the third of the four principal councils of that time, which condemned Nestorius for having taught, against the truth of the Catholic faith, that Jesus Christ, Son of God, was not born of the Blessed Virgin Mary as God, but only as man; and that, consequently, Mary ought not to be called the Mother of God, but only the Mother of Christ.

He also said that there were two persons in Jesus Christ, as there are two natures: that is, the divine person and the human person. Eutyches himself combated this heresy in an admirable manner at the time of the council. But because he allowed himself to be carried away by hatred against the false doctrine of Nestorius, he forgot himself to such a point that he denied not only the two persons in Jesus Christ - which was just - but also the two natures. Thus he accused of being tainted with Nestorianism those who confessed two natures in Jesus Christ, natures nevertheless truly distinct from one another.

This new heresiarch fell into such madness that he taught that Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary according to the flesh, but that His body, like a ray of sunlight, descended from heaven into her womb; and that, at the instant of His Incarnation, His flesh was changed into the Divinity. It is in this way that the first of these heresies became the occasion of the second, in the year 448. Against this latter heresy the Council of Chalcedon was convoked, the last of the four principal councils of that time, under the emperor Marcian and the sovereign Pontiff Leo I, in the year 451.

It is on this occasion that Saint John says in the text: The fourth angel sounded the trumpet. That is, Nestorius sounded the trumpet by preaching this heresy. And the third part of the sun was struck, and the third part of the moon. The sun is here understood of the Divinity, and the moon of the Humanity of Christ, which is, as it were, the footstool of God. The sun also signifies Jesus Christ, and the moon the Blessed Virgin Mary, or again the Catholic Church. All of these were struck or attacked, both by the heresy of Nestorius and by that of Eutyches - not intrinsically, since in themselves they are invulnerable, but in relation to the faithful believers who were seduced and struck with blindness by the darkness of these errors.

And the third part of the stars, etc. The stars are the bishops, prelates, and doctors who, having allowed themselves to be enveloped and blinded by the night of these errors, went astray and departed from the true Church of Christ. And these heresiarchs blasphemed against the New and Old Testament, and against the Gospel and the Prophets.

This is why Saint John immediately adds: So that their third part was darkened, and the day lost the third part of its light, and the night likewise. That is, the principal testimonies of the New Testament, expressed by the day, and those of the Old, designated by the night, concerning the true Humanity of Christ, His Incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the unity of His divine Person, were so obscured in the minds of the faithful by the perfidy of these two heresiarchs that these testimonies completely ceased to shine before the eyes of the faithful in all their truth. Now these four heresies spoken of here were like the gateway of all the heresies that followed, and even of those that preceded them, since the latter were their forerunners, and the former their consequences.

III. VERSE 13. And I saw, and I heard the voice of an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice: Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the three angels who are yet to sound the trumpet. In this verse, Saint John announces the immense evils and tribulations that will happen throughout the whole world at the voice of the last three angels. One part of these calamities was caused by the preceding heresies, and the other part will be produced by the errors which we shall describe in the following chapters.

And I saw, and I heard the voice of an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, etc. This eagle is Saint John the Evangelist himself, who rose into the high regions of heaven by the revelation that was made to him. He saw in spirit all the events which, with time, had to be accomplished in the Church until the consummation of the ages. And because the horrors of these later events were to surpass even those of the preceding ones, he takes care to inform all Christendom of them, so that the faithful of good will who witness them may not be scandalised by them, may not fall, and may not allow themselves to be led into error; for blows that have been foreseen are ordinarily less harmful.

I heard the voice of an eagle, etc., saying with a loud voice - as though to make the greatness of the tribulations to come be felt in advance: Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the three angels who are yet to sound the trumpet. By the inhabitants of the earth one understands the whole human race, including both the good and the wicked; for all will be victims of these events, as we shall see later.

CHAPTER 9

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

Revelation 9:1–21

Section II: On Chapter 9 - Of the Fifth and Sixth Angel

§ 1. On the Fifth Angel Who Sounded the Trumpet. Chapter 9, Verses 1-12

VERSE 1. And the fifth angel sounded the trumpet; and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven upon the earth, and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. The star which fell from heaven at the sound of the trumpet of the fifth angel was the emperor Valens, a zealous and powerful supporter of the heresy of Arius. This error began to take such proportions under this prince that the Apostle rightly attributes the sounding of the fifth trumpet principally to the precise period of his reign, because of the considerable damage which he caused to the Church. Indeed, this prince did more harm by supporting and propagating this heresy than Arius had done by preaching it and by sounding his first trumpet.

Seduced by the flatteries of his wife, who had been caught in the snares of Arianism, and by the treacherous eloquence of Eudoxius, bishop of Constantinople and the most guilty of all the Arians, this emperor became one of the most ardent supporters of that sect. He had himself baptised by that same bishop, and bound himself by oath to remain always faithful to that impious doctrine. In fact, he protected it with such zeal that he became a true persecutor of orthodox Christians. He spared against them neither exile nor torture. He banished them from their churches and prohibited all their assemblies. He was a fierce enemy of the monks of Egypt, whom he dragged from their solitude in order to make them serve in the army.

We shall add only that the most treacherous of his crimes was that, at the instigation of the impious Eudoxius, he sent Arian priests to the Goths, who, on the contrary, were asking to embrace the true faith of Jesus Christ. He acted in the same manner toward the Vandals, who afterward became such formidable enemies of Catholics that, for the space of one hundred and fifty years, they flooded Thrace, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Italy, Burgundy, and other countries still, with frightful calamities through their continual incursions. This lasted until, under the emperor Justinian, in the year 527, Belisarius and Narses defeated and annihilated these barbarians.

VERSE 1. And the fifth angel sounded the trumpet. This angel is placed in the fifth rank according to the order of the narration and revelation of Saint John, who goes back over the consequences and terrible injuries that resulted from the error of Arius. It is known, in fact, that it was the impious Eudoxius, a presumptuous and treacherous man, who sounded the trumpet and persuaded the emperor Valens to embrace this error.

And I saw a star that had fallen from heaven upon the earth. Here the emperor Valens is meant, compared to a star because of the distinguished qualities which would have made him shine among princes, had he not tarnished them in the darkness of Arianism. He is also compared to a star because of the insignia of imperial dignity, which ought always to make emperors shine and elevate them above the princes and peoples subject to them by a deeper knowledge of the true faith and by the superiority of their virtues.

And I saw a star - the emperor Valens - that had fallen from heaven, that is, from the militant Church of Christ, upon the earth. The Apostle speaks in the past tense, saying that this emperor had fallen, because of his obstinacy and his oath, which he did in fact fulfil, since he died an Arian. It is also said that he fell from heaven upon the earth because he was abandoned, despised, rejected by God, and even deprived of ecclesiastical burial after dying miserably.

And the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. This key designates the imperial power which had been given to him from on high, and God permitted him to use it impiously to spread the heresy of Arius everywhere.

VERSE 2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and the smoke of the pit arose as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. And he opened the bottomless pit - that is, he opened everywhere the ways to this error, gave it the greatest liberty, and supported it with all his efforts, taking away churches and bishoprics from Catholics almost throughout the earth, in order to consecrate them to the worship of error. The pit here signifies, by metaphor, the heresy of Arius itself; and the abyss designates hell. For just as the waters which spread over the earth come out of the abyss of the seas, so also all heresies which spread throughout the world come from hell.

II. These words express the horrible evils which this abominable heresy produced, both in the Catholic Church and in the Roman Empire. First, with regard to the Church, this is seen in these words: And the smoke of the pit arose as the smoke of a great furnace. By smoke, Saint John shows us the exaltation, promotion, and extension of the heresy of Arius. For smoke rises into the air, darkens the light, and spreads over the earth by expanding through space.

Now such is the character of heresies: after having found supporters like Lucifer, who is their first author, they rise above everything and climb up into the highest regions of intelligence; they darken the sun, or the light of truth; they devour it like a gnawing cancer; and they spread over the earth by corrupting men, and even by causing the extermination of those who try to oppose them. The heresy of Arius is compared here to the smoke of a great furnace because of its immense power and long duration, which surpassed those of all the others, since it lasted until the reign of Justinian I, in the year 527, and since it had for supporters and followers the most powerful and distinguished emperors, kings, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and others, as is seen in ecclesiastical history.

And the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. These words indicate a particular property of this heresy: the denigration of the Name of Christ and of His Church. For the sun represents Christ, who was, as it were, darkened in His outward glory, since the Arians denied that He is the Son of God, true God Himself, and consubstantial with the Father. By this blasphemy, they thus took away His divine glory among men. The air signifies the Catholic Church, which is illuminated by Christ, just as the visible sun spreads its light in the air.

Now, under the reign of Valens and his powerful successors, the Church was truly darkened by Arianism, because of the great number of those who embraced it. In the time of the emperor Zeno, there was not even the smallest reigning monarch who was Catholic. Finally, it is said that the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit because the heresy of Arius would never have acquired such dominion without the protection granted to it by Valens.

III. VERSE 3. And from the smoke of the pit there came out locusts upon the earth. In these words Saint John describes the horrible calamities which this heresy spread over the Roman Empire and over other kingdoms as well. These evils are divided into two parts. The first is contained in these words: And it was given to them to torment them for five months. The

other part is found in this passage: And their power was to hurt men for five months.

To understand these things, one must remember that Valens dragged the Goths and the Vandals into the error of Arius, although they had asked to be instructed in the true faith, and that he even forced them, by a treaty of alliance, to become part of his sect, sending them Arian priests for that purpose. But shortly afterward, by a just permission of God, this impious plot fell back upon the head of Valens himself.

For the Goths, who were divided among themselves into several factions, united again; and full of confidence in their own strength, they maltreated the Thracians and cruelly devastated their country. Valens, who was then at Antioch, was no sooner informed of this than he recognised in these acts the disastrous effect of the error he had committed; for by this circumstance he lost a powerful ally in that nation, which was so warlike and so useful to himself and to his empire. As for his own troops, he had made so little account of them that, instead of paying them and seeking to attach them to himself, he even required them to pay him tribute, so true it is that God blinds those who turn away from Him.

After devastating Thrace, the Goths marched on Constantinople. Valens sent Trajan against them, who was immediately defeated, put to flight, and forced to retreat. Meanwhile, the emperor wished to try the fortune of arms himself; but he too was defeated and routed near Adrianople, and he perished miserably, burned in a hut, in the year 378. From that time onward the Goths, the Vandals, and the other barbarians prevailed everywhere until the reign of Justinian in the year 527.

For around the year of Jesus Christ 403, in the faction of Stilicho, who had previously oppressed Abagasius, king of the Goths, holding him enclosed in the passes of the Ticino with an army of 200,000 men, the Vandals, Sueves, Alans, Burgundians, and all the barbarian hordes invaded Gaul. It was then that Alaric, king of the Goths, claiming the throne of Gaul which Honorius had given him, became enraged and came to lay siege to Rome in the year 409.

That city had to ransom itself with money; and despite this, it was besieged a second time by the same Alaric, who captured it and stripped it of its riches for three consecutive years, subjecting it thus to trials, in a certain sense, harder than if he had destroyed it. One may see in Lechmanius and in Baronius how much the Western Empire had to suffer from the incursions of Attila, the Huns, and the other barbarians under the reign of Valentinian III, in the year of Jesus Christ 451.

Later Rome was again sacked by Genseric, leader of the Vandals. Odoacer, in his turn, devastated Italy with a powerful army of Heruli and made himself master of it for fourteen years. That unhappy country then passed for many years under the yoke of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, a barbarian prince given over to avarice, who defeated Odoacer before Verona in the year 475.

Under the emperor Zeno, the Vandals passed into Africa, and their king Huneric delivered 4,966 bishops and priests to the Moors to be deported into the deserts, while the Ostrogoths, on their side, occupied Italy, Gaul, Burgundy, and Spain. Thus these barbarian hordes ran from kingdom to kingdom, carrying ruin and desolation everywhere, until finally, around the year of Jesus Christ 510, Clovis, king of the Franks, having embraced the Catholic faith, defeated and killed Alaric, king of the Visigoths, who had reigned for twenty-two years in Gaul.

Finally, in the year 527, Justinian the Great having ascended the throne of the empire, caused the Vandals to be driven from Africa by Belisarius and Narses, retook Carthage, annihilated the Parthians who were ravaging Syria, killed Totila, who had seized Rome and

reduced it to ashes, and drove all the Goths out of Italy. It was in this way that, after the course of one hundred and fifty years, these fierce nations were exterminated, disappearing with Arianism, which the emperor Valens had revived; and from that time onward the Catholic faith began again to flourish and prosper.

Nevertheless, the venom of Arius did not completely disappear for all that. For Narses allowed the jealousy which he nourished in his heart against Justin the Younger, governor of Italy, to break out with a kind of rage. He recalled into that country the Lombards, of Scandinavian origin, who were then in Pannonia and infected with Arianism, and used this powerful and faithful ally to drive out the Goths.

The Lombards, having set themselves in motion with the Huns their allies, under the leadership of Alboin their king, in the year 570, first occupied Cisalpine Gaul, then invaded Italy, and established the seat of their power at Pavia. Saint Gregory, in his first homily on the Gospel, and after him Paul the Deacon, relate that before this invasion, terrible signs were seen at night in the heavens, where fiery armies drawn up in battle could be distinguished with the eye, and where human blood was even seen flowing, which was afterward in fact horribly shed.

The same Saint Gregory certainly considers the invasion of the Lombards into Italy as one of the cruellest persecutions of the Church. For all the kings, with the sole exception of Agilulf - who, having renounced Arianism in order to enter the Catholic faith with his whole nation, afterward reigned for forty years - all the kings, we say, showed themselves to be the most fervent defenders of the impiety of Arius.

This terrible scourge lasted no less than one hundred and fifty years, until the reign of Pepin, who ascended the throne of Gaul in the year 751 and, after taking Ravenna at the request of Pope Stephen, restrained Aistulf, who was then exercising his ravages in Italy and in the Roman states. Afterward his son Charlemagne, at the prayer of the sovereign Pontiff Adrian I, cast down from the throne the successor and son of Aistulf, seized his crown, and thus put an end to the tyranny of the Lombards.

Finally, around the year 774, by the help of God, this most pious and most powerful emperor relegated to the abysses of hell the sect of Arius, together with all its tyranny and cruelty; and the Catholic faith began again to spread far and wide, on land and on sea, through the conversion of the Slavs in Pannonia, the Huns, the Sueves, the Goths, the Ostrogoths, and, in Germany, the Saxons, the Danes, and almost all the Germans, especially of the northern region.

IV. VERSE 3. And from the smoke of the pit there came out locusts upon the earth. By the locusts are understood the barbarians of the North, especially and principally the Goths and the Vandals infected with Arianism. The Apostle represents them metaphorically under the form of locusts: 1. To make us understand the multitude that was to spread everywhere among peoples and nations, like locusts. For the martyr Methodius, Jordanes the Goth, and Paul the Deacon report that it was from the North that there came the Massagetae, the Huns, the Amazons, the Cimbri, the Parthians, the Lombards, the Heruli, the Sueves, the Bulgarians, the Danes, the Dacians, the Germans, the Slavs, the Burgundians, the Livonians, the Serbs, the Normans, the Celts, and others.

All these nations spread over the earth like locusts, in the times fixed and permitted by God, and ravaged everything that presented itself before them, so that they may rightly be considered scourges which God had reserved for Himself to chastise the whole world, and Christendom in particular, according to the word of the prophet Jeremiah 1:14: "From the north shall an evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land." And again, Jeremiah 4:6-7: "I will bring an evil from the north, and great destruction. The lion is come up from his

den, and the robber of nations is risen; he is gone forth out of his place, to make thy land desolate: thy cities shall be laid waste, remaining without an inhabitant."

2. As locusts leap from place to place, and, seeking their food, ruin and devour fields, meadows, harvests, and flowers, so these barbarous nations passed from Spain into Thrace, into Africa, and from there into Italy, then into Gaul, and so on, ravaging and devastating everything. 3. Just as locusts are very nimble, and escape by a single leap from the hand that wishes to seize them, so these nations established themselves now in one place, now in another. And from the smoke of the pit there came out locusts upon the earth, because, through the support which the heresy of Arius found in the emperor Valens, all these nations were infected by it.

And these locusts spread, by a just judgment of God, over the land of the empire, against Valens himself, and then over other lands and kingdoms, as has been said. And power was given to them as the power of scorpions of the earth. The power which these peoples held from God and from nature is compared to that of scorpions: 1. Because of their weapon. For the scorpion, in its anterior part, has the shape of a bow, and carries at its tail something like an arrow, which is a venomous dart by which it gives death to man. Now it is in this way that these nations had as their weapon a kind of crossbow, by means of which they launched sharp and slender darts, for the most part poisoned, and thus caused serious and even mortal wounds.

2. Because of speed. For the scorpion is very agile with its tail in wounding man; and thus these nations were very skilful and very practised in the handling of their weapons, with which they rained their deadly arrows upon their enemies. This is why it was very difficult to wage war against them, and victory over them was rarely obtained. 3. This resemblance with the scorpion is also found in the perfidy of the Arians, which was truly like a subtle and dangerous venom, by means of which they successively infected all nations and almost the whole world, occupying one kingdom after another, and establishing Arian kings everywhere.

4. The scorpion is a dangerous, cunning, and skilful animal, which hides in the cracks of stones, and in the corners of walls and houses, in order to surprise men unexpectedly and to wound to death whoever has not been able to forestall them. Now such was the character of these barbarous and fierce nations: very cunning in the art of war, very ingenious in the invention of engines, and at the same time prudent, knowing perfectly how to lay ambushes for their enemies in order to surprise them unexpectedly and seize their countries and cities. It was in this way that they covered the world with ruins and devastations.

VERSE 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth. These words show us the restriction of the Arian power according to the will of God, for the preservation of His Church and the advantage of His elect. For divine justice permits, in its impenetrable counsels, most of the evils and calamities of this world in such a way that complete extermination cannot result from them. God knows how to moderate and direct the evils which He makes us undergo, so that they may serve as chastisements inflicted on sinners and the impious, and as trials for the elect. God also knows how to draw sublime and admirable goods out of evil.

And it was commanded them - that is, the barbarity and power of these nations were moderated and contained by the decrees of God - that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, that is, that in their massacres they should spare the Christian people, metaphorically represented by the grass of the earth. And every green thing. This passage applies to the French nation, which was in fact spared by the Goths and Vandals, and reserved as a young vine for the Catholic faith, which it embraced with its king Clovis.

Clovis finally yielded to the continual solicitations of Saint Clotilde, his wife, in the year 500 of the Christian era. It was after a brilliant victory won by the help of heaven over the Germans that he became Catholic and delivered Italy from the Arian Alaric, king of the Visigoths, whom he killed. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any tree. That is, they were not to hurt the prelates and priests, nearly all of whom escaped death, although they had much to suffer, especially in Africa, from Huneric, king of the Vandals.

But only those men who have not the sign of God on their foreheads. These words refer to the rest of the pagans who had not yet received the character of Baptism. It is known, in fact, that a great number of them were killed in Africa by the Vandals, and also in the other regions which the barbarians invaded. However, since the Arians gloried in the name of Christians, they spared Catholics from death, although they afflicted them with many calamities and made them undergo exile and other adversities, as is seen in ecclesiastical history.

VERSE 5. And it was given to them that they should not kill them. This passage again refers to the Christians of whom mention was made above. Holy Scripture sometimes passes, in the same passage, from certain persons to others, as though the latter were the same as the first. Psalm 77:38: "When he slew them, then they sought him," where it is clearly seen that the persons who had been struck to death by the Lord were not those who sought Him.

Now it is in the same manner that Saint John speaks here of the inhabitants of Africa, some of whom were Christians and others pagans. Passing thus from one group to the other, he says in the same text: And it was given to them - that is, God permitted these nations - not to kill the Christians, but to torment them. This in fact happened when bishops, doctors, and other Catholics were sent into exile, and when some were even mistreated and persecuted in various ways without losing their lives.

For, as we have said, Huneric, king of the Vandals, raised up a strong persecution against the orthodox in Africa, and in one stroke delivered 4,966 bishops and priests to the Moors, to have them transported into the deserts. His successor did the same thing, and even worse. For he had the tongues of orthodox bishops torn out; yet, by a miracle of God, this did not prevent them from speaking and preaching.

Moreover, one sees in history with what cruelty they ravaged France and persecuted its inhabitants. It is known from the same source how much damage the Vandals and Huns caused in Gaul. One recalls that Alaric, king of the Goths, laid siege to Rome, then lifted the siege, and that the following year he returned before that city, captured it, and afflicted it by three years of pillage, without, however, delivering its inhabitants to the edge of the sword. Is not history full of the cruelties of Attila, king of the Huns, called the scourge of God; of Genseric, king of the Vandals; of Totila and Odoacer?

And do we not know how much these barbarians and others still tormented Christians in a thousand different ways - sometimes by reducing them to captivity, sometimes by despoiling them, sometimes by inflicting horrible torments upon them, in the successive incursions which they made almost throughout the whole world? This is why the text expressly adds: And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should torment them, because of various crimes committed by the Christians themselves in several places, and in Gaul in particular, and because of the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline.

For five months. These words designate the duration of the power and empire of these Arian nations. On this occasion, it must be remarked that in Scripture days count for years. Now, since the months are of twenty-eight, thirty, or thirty-one days, if one takes one month of twenty-eight days, two months of thirty days, and two other months of thirty-one days, one

has five months, which make one hundred and fifty days - that is, one hundred and fifty years. This is precisely the duration of the reign of the Goths, from the year of Jesus Christ 377 until the year 527, as was said above.

And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. 1. In these words one finds another characteristic property of these nations. For they were like a wound in the Catholic Church; they infected many of the faithful and caused them spiritual death by spreading the poison of Arianism in the countries they occupied. For this reason the wounds of these enemies of the Church may perfectly be compared to the sting of the scorpion.

For: a. just as this animal, when it wishes to harm, first opens with its sting the skin of its victim; b. then pours its venom into the wound; c. and causes a dangerous injury; d. and death itself follows if the proper remedies are not applied in time; so these nations introduced themselves by force of arms into kingdoms, in order to have the opportunity to harm them and establish their power there.

2. They spread through the body of the Church, which is established throughout the earth, the venom of the error with which they poisoned various peoples. 3. They made a deep and dangerous wound by trampling underfoot the Church and all holy and sacred things. 4. Finally, they caused spiritual death to a great number of Catholics, who abandoned the true faith at the sight of such scandal. The just who persevered in their fidelity were afflicted and tormented in the presence of so many calamities which they could not remedy. Hence the Apostle immediately adds:

VERSE 6. And in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them. V. It is in fact proper to saints and pious souls to be much more afflicted than if they themselves had to endure death, when they see the general loss of souls, the seduction of the innocent, the defection of the faithful, the contempt of holy things, the ruin of churches, the exile of the just, and the blasphemies of the wicked. For they cannot remedy these evils or prevent the prevarication over which they groan in their hearts.

It is then that they weep before the Lord, desiring to die rather than see the evils of their people. We have an example of this in Scripture, where Judas says in 1 Maccabees 3:59: "It is better for us to die in battle, than to see the evils of our nation and of the sanctuary."

In those days men shall seek death, etc. These words signify the affliction and desolation of that time of Arianism. And because these misfortunes were immense, especially for the prelates of the Church, the Apostle adds: And they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them. One sees, in fact, from what precedes, how great this affliction and desolation was. It lasted the considerable space of one hundred and fifty years. It successively invaded almost all kingdoms.

And it is known that the Church and her prelates never have so much to suffer as when emperors, kings, and princes are her adversaries. For then the very columns of the Church collapse, as God particularly permitted in the time of Zeno, when the Catholic religion did not count a single reigning prince among the faithful. It is said that men shall seek death, and shall not find it to mark the difference between their state and that of the martyrs.

For in the time of the first persecutions, the faithful joyfully sought and found a glorious death amid torments; whereas in this persecution, God permitted His elect to be horribly and long tormented without obtaining the glory of martyrdom - which was the hardest thing to bear for just men.

VERSE 7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold. In this text the Apostle continues to develop and explain the preceding words. Since he had said that the Goths and Vandals were locusts, he

now indicates the conditions and properties of these nations under the name of locusts. 1. And the shapes of the locusts - that is, of the Goths and Vandals - were like unto horses prepared unto battle, to announce that they would be warlike, fierce, and courageous.

For just as horses about to fight, hearing bugles and trumpets, toss their manes, foam, paw the earth with their feet, are almost untamable, show themselves magnanimous, manifest their ardour by neighing, trample everything under their feet, and finally run toward victory through every obstacle, so these peoples of the North awaited and desired battle with impatience, and signalled, as it were, by the same gestures, their ardour, courage, and fearlessness. This is why the Apostle says that they were like horses prepared for battle; for horses are ready to run into combat whenever it pleases their rider to mount them and lead them there.

Now such were these peoples, rightly called the scourge of God, waiting only for the signal of the divine will to go into the world and chastise Christians. That is why it is said: "Every evil shall come from the north." It is therefore with as much eloquence as truth that Saint John represents these peoples as like horses prepared for battle.

2. And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold. These words denote the false brilliance of skill, cunning, foresight, and human prudence - qualities by which these barbarous nations were to surpass other peoples and even Christians, according to this word of Jesus Christ in Luke 16:8: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." They wore as it were crowns like gold, not because they were crowns such as kings wear, but because wisdom is often compared to a crown. For wisdom ought to form kings and crown them. And these crowns were as it were crowns like gold - that is, they were not absolutely of gold, but resembled gold - in order to express the difference between worldly wisdom and true heavenly wisdom, which alone is truly like gold.

3. And their faces were as the faces of men. This passage indicates that these nations were to be Christian. For it must be known that in this chapter there is question of two different classes of men: a. men who are not marked on the forehead, namely, pagans and Gentiles, as was said above; b. and men simply so called, namely, Catholics and true Christians, of whom we have spoken while discussing the afflictions which the Vandals made them undergo.

In those days men shall seek death. That is, because these barbarous nations were baptised and gloried in the name of Christian, although in reality they were not Christian, since they were infected with the error of Arius. It is therefore with reason that, in order to distinguish them perfectly both from pagans and from Catholics, the author of the Apocalypse tells us that their faces were as the faces of men.

VERSE 8. 4. And their hair as the hair of women. This is because these nations allowed their hair to grow, as one still sometimes sees in our own day. Long hair indicates strength; and although it is no longer in use, it was nevertheless very useful to the warriors of that time, to protect them from cold and dampness in bivouacs and similar conditions. Scripture says that Samson's strength consisted in his hair, which he did not have cut, like the Nazarites among the Jews. Thus it appears likely that these nations of whom Saint John speaks had the custom of letting their hair grow from childhood without ever cutting it. This is why it is said that their hair was as the hair of women.

5. And their teeth as the teeth of lions. These words indicate the ferocity, fury, and strength which distinguished these nations from all others. For just as the lion is considered the strongest and most terrible of animals, having its principal strength in its head and in its teeth, with which it seizes, tears, and devours everything it encounters, so also these nations were to be the fiercest, the cruellest, and the most powerful, to tear and devour others.

VERSE 9. 6. And they had breastplates as breastplates of iron. Warriors wear the breastplate to ward off the arrows and blows of the enemy. This word breastplate derives from leather; formerly warriors protected their chest with the hardest and strongest leather, that of camels or other animals, as is now done with iron breastplates. This is why it is said in the text: They had breastplates as breastplates of iron. That is, these nations marched against the enemy with the greatest precaution, strongly armed and well equipped, not exposing themselves rashly to arrows and spears. Their breastplates were made of leather so hard and strong that they can perfectly be compared to iron. At the same time, they were so supple and so well fitted that they resisted arrows as if they had been iron.

7. And the noise of their wings was as the noise of chariots of many horses running to battle. It is said here that these nations had wings in order to express their swiftness in their warlike expeditions. They seemed to fly from kingdom to kingdom and from region to region with their armies, whose rapid movement produced a frightening noise, ravaging everything in their path, as was said above. Isaiah 7:18: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest in the torrents of the valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all shrubs."

a. By flies and bees, the prophet designates warlike nations. b. By wings are also understood the wings of the armies of these nations which, being arranged in good order of battle, flew to combat and attacked the enemy with such courage, animosity, energy, and shouting that the earth was shaken. One sees the same thing in Scripture, 1 Maccabees 9:13: "And the earth was moved with the noise of the armies." And because these nations had acquired a great reputation for courage and military valour, no less than for skill in the art of making war, they easily won victory over an enemy already intimidated and demoralised. This is why the noise of their wings was as the noise of chariots of many horses running to battle.

For when a great multitude of combatants run to battle with the numerous war machines which ordinarily accompany them, they make such a horrible noise that they inspire terror and fright; and the sound of trumpets and bugles only adds to this horrible tumult. The horses themselves, excited and animated, run, leap, neigh, and toss their manes, showing in this way their joy and courage. Thus these warlike and barbarous nations made war and ran upon the enemy.

VERSE 10. 8. And their tails were like to scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. By these tails one understands metaphorically the disastrous consequences of the incursions of these barbarians, which were a universal ruin and devastation of all the kingdoms through which they passed at various periods. These words also indicate the considerable damage which these peoples caused to the Church. And there were stings in their tails. These stings also signify the various errors which these nations left after them, in the same way that certain venomous animals leave their sting behind in the wound they have made.

9. And their power was to hurt men five months. In this passage we are shown the second part of the evils which resulted from this heresy for the Church in general, and for the Roman Empire in particular. We see there first the length of time during which the Lombards made Italy bear their iron yoke. These Lombards were a wicked nation, the den and centre of all the other barbarous nations who, after the Huns, their allies, had left Pannonia, followed their king Alboin to invade Cisalpine Gaul and then Italy, and to exercise their ravages there for one hundred and fifty years, as has been explained above.

From this one must conclude that the first five months spoken of in the text designate the time of the occupation of Italy and other countries by the Goths and Vandals; and the other five months indicate the duration of the Lombard yoke, under which the Church and the

Roman Empire had so much to groan. It is historically true that their reign was longer and lasted from one hundred and ninety to two hundred years. But the text is nevertheless right to say that they harmed men only for one hundred and fifty years, since one of their kings, Agilulf, having become Catholic with the whole nation, ceased to be hostile throughout his reign, which lasted forty years.

Now by subtracting this number from the preceding one, one obtains, according to the text, the duration of the time during which they harmed men. And their power was to hurt men five months. If no mention is made of the rest of their reign, it is because it would have been superfluous; and the Holy Spirit inspires and writes nothing useless.

VERSE 11. 10. And they had over them a king, the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek Apollyon, and in Latin the Exterminator. By this angel-king, the Holy Spirit designates a being of a distinguished and superior nature. This is the angel of the principalities who, at the head of his evil angels, comes to support the wicked in their impious war and to push them to afflict, fight, and destroy the Church of Jesus Christ, if that were possible. The text indicates only one, the principal one of these angels, who represents all the others. This is to make us understand that all the impious, the heretics, and their supporters and promoters have in common one and the same goal: to wage without ceasing a war of ruin and extermination against Jesus Christ and His Church.

To explain this passage better, we must not pass over in silence that, according to Saint Denis and the general opinion of the holy Doctors, the fallen angels preserved their natural qualities intact; and consequently, they continued to possess among themselves the distinction of orders, according to the distinction of their natures. Moreover, the Doctors commonly admit that a certain number of angels showed themselves rebellious against God in each of the orders or of the nine choirs, so that their distinguishing names were retained among the demons.

Now the first of these orders in the infernal hierarchy is that of the principalities, whose evil angels have the right and power of pre-eminence in different kingdoms, and in general and particular wars. From this it happens that, in opposition to the holy angels who are sent by God to excite kingdoms and nations to good, the evil angels of the same order are accredited by Lucifer to push them toward evil and tyranny against Christians, and to overturn the militant Church by war. Everything evil that they can do in the kingdom of God by His permission, they carry out through the satellites whom they dominate, and who are the impious, the heretics, and bad Christians.

For although all kingdoms and all men have good and evil angels who inspire them, the good angels have predominance over the bad, or the bad over the good, according to the condition of those kingdoms, according to the choice of human will, and also according as God permits. And it is of the evil angel who presided over the wars of the Goths and Vandals that the text adds: They had over them as king the angel of the abyss.

In a state, the king is the one who has predominance over all the others. All his subjects obey him, listen to his voice, and even follow him to war. Now all heretics constitute a true kingdom whose prince has always been and will always be Lucifer, who, through his various chiefs subordinate to him, leads the sectarians and the impious to the war of this world against Christ and His Church, whatever class and period they may belong to. And it is from God alone that he holds his power, or at least the permission to harm men in great states as in small ones.

They had over them as king the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek Apollyon, and in Latin the Exterminator. Here the question is why this name of the angel of the abyss is expressed in three languages. To answer this, it must be known that

Saint John wrote the Apocalypse for the universal Church. Now these three languages are the principal ones, and they contain or represent all the others. Moreover, these three languages represent, by the principal nations and the principal periods of those languages, the whole Catholic Church from her origin until her consummation.

1. The Church took her origin and began to flourish among the Jews or Hebrews most distinguished by their holiness, who converted to the faith of Jesus Christ, and whose number was indeed very small in proportion to the whole nation. Now it was from these same Hebrews who had become Christians that the first heretics arose. Excited by Satan, they undertook to make war upon the Church of Christ. It is known from the Acts of the Apostles that their principal grievances were circumcision and the yoke of the Law of Moses, which they claimed to impose upon the Gentiles.

2. Then came the Greek Church formed from the pagans. This Church shone especially by the number, learning, and virtue of its holy Doctors. But a great number of these Greeks, seduced by the angel of the abyss, declared fierce war against the Church of Jesus Christ by teaching the most dangerous dogmas and by introducing schisms against the sovereign Pontiffs, legitimate successors of Saint Peter. The most wicked of them was Arius, who, as has been said, being supported by the emperor Valens, corrupted the Goths and the Vandals. But, by a just judgment of God, this impious power was finally broken; and this Greek Church, with all its empire, soiled with a thousand errors, fell under the power of the Turks and became tributary to them, as it continues in part to be.

3. The Latin Church and the Western Empire succeeded the Greek Church and the Empire of the East, through the conversion of all the nations which formed part of it, especially in the time of Charlemagne. This Church will preserve her empire in the West until the coming of the son of perdition. At the time when the Church became Latin, she had existed for eight hundred years. She then found herself in her fourth age, enjoying perfect peace and tranquillity. She was free from all heresy for two hundred years, until Berengarius the Sacramentarian rose up against her in Gaul.

This heresiarch denied, as we have already said, transubstantiation and the real presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. Satan, or the angel of the abyss, cannot suffer the Church to be at peace. This is why, after Berengarius, he tried several times to continue the war against the Church by means of impious men, as is seen in ecclesiastical history. But all his efforts were paralysed and caused little or no damage to the Church, which always succeeded in repressing heretics by the piety of her princes, by the vigilance of her Pontiffs, and above all by the protection of God.

By examining the various heresies, one sees that they prepared the way for that of Luther - that monster, that infernal dragon, to whom Germany gave birth in the year 1517, and whose evident goal was the complete ruin of the Latin Church. This heresiarch recalled from hell all the preceding heresies and vomited them from his impure mouth against this Church, as will be seen later. One sees clearly, therefore, from what we have just said, why Saint John, writing for the universal Church, gives the name of this angel of the abyss in three languages.

It is in order to make us understand that it is always the same demon: formerly the king, chief, and teacher of the Goths and Vandals, who presided over the sect of Arius through the Lombards. And it is this same demon who will be the chief, king, teacher, and seducer of all heretics who will come afterward, and especially of those of our own days who deny the visible head of the Church.

VERSE 12. One woe is past, and behold there come yet two woes more hereafter.

§ 2. On the Sixth Angel Who Sounded the Trumpet. Chapter 9, Verses 13-19

I. VERSE 13. And the sixth angel sounded the trumpet. When, therefore, the reign of the Lombards and the Goths had been destroyed, and the heresy of Arius had been relegated to hell, the Church of Christ enjoyed perfect rest, and had no heresy to deplore from the year 800 of the Christian era until the appearance of the deacon Berengarius in Gaul, in the year 1048, who dared to deny the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. In the year 1117, Durandus of Wandoch, together with another sectarian in Aragon, taught that marriage is only disguised concubinage; but both were burned, and by this means an end was put to that nascent heresy.

Thus all the heresies that appeared were suppressed at their origin, so that the Latin Church and the Western Empire had no considerable misfortune to deplore until 1517, when Martin Luther appeared in Germany, whom one may consider as the prince of heresiarchs. The holy prophet does not describe all the lesser evils that would happen in the Church. He confines himself to the principal ones, leaving aside those intermediate and less important heresiarchs who were only, as we have said, the forerunners of the great calamity that we are about to describe.

For this reason, in the fifth age, and under the figure of the sixth angel sounding the trumpet, he applies himself to depicting the greatest and most terrible of heresiarchs, with all his characteristics and with all the consequences of his errors. It is enough to examine the context, the nature, and the character of this heresiarch and of his errors, to be convinced that it is indeed Martin Luther whom Saint John designates literally by the sixth angel who sounded the trumpet.

First, because Lucifer, the king of darkness, found in Luther a useful instrument for the execution of his plans, he chose him as leader in the war of extermination which he was about to declare against the Latin Church. Lucifer gave this monk, to direct him, a teacher of consummate malice and cunning, whom Saint John rightly calls the angel of the abyss and the teacher of all heresiarchs, as we have seen above, and whose name in Latin means Exterminator. Now it is known that Luther often gloried in this name himself, which indeed suits him.

Second, Martin Luther must consequently be considered the worst and most dangerous of all heresiarchs, since he vomited against the Latin Church errors so perverse and so numerous that there is not a single point of faith or morals which this heretic, or his adherents, left untouched. There followed such confusion of ideas, and minds were so divided among themselves, that one may consider this evil as going on to infinity. At least, one will not find a province, a city, a hamlet, a family - what am I saying? not even two men of the same house - who think alike and agree on all the points of their belief.

The fundamental principle of this calamity has its source in private interpretation and individual examination of Holy Scripture. And from this principle flowed an infinity of different sects, whose principal and earliest leaders were Thomas Münzer, John Oecolampadius, Andrew Carlostadt, Zwingli, John Calvin, George David, Christopher Schapler, Philip Melanchthon, Martin Bucer, John of Westphalia, Balthasar Parimontanus, John of Leiden, John Spangenberg, Michael Servetus, John Brenz, Theodore Beza, Luc Sterenberg, who were deists or trinitarians; Louis Alemann, who was an atheist; and so on. See the catalogue of Lindau, bishop of Roermond, concerning Martin Luther and the origin and homeland of all the heresiarchs of that time.

Third, we have learned only too well, to our misfortune, the particular character of this heresy: it excites war and sedition, as Luther himself took pleasure in publishing in his speeches and writings, and according to that favourite expression of Zwingli: "The Gospel demands blood." This seditious and bloody doctrine of Luther, proclaimed loudly and spread publicly by pamphlets and preachings against God and monarchs, in fact provoked a terrible shedding of blood.

Excited by Luther's voice, and pushed into revolt by Münzer, Carlostadt, Bucer, and still others, a mass of misguided men, known under the name of peasants, invaded the monasteries and churches of Swabia, Alsace, Thuringia, and Franconia, to pillage and destroy them. In Franconia alone, as many as three hundred cloisters and one hundred and eighty feudal castles were sacked. These rebels spared neither persons nor property, and they gave themselves over to such excesses in the massacre of nobles that there resulted an open war, which the nobles undertook against the peasants, and in which more than 130,000 of these madmen fell.

How many victims had to pay with their blood for Zwingli's furies in the civil war which so cruelly afflicted Switzerland! Then came the wars of France and Belgium, which lasted from the year 1595; then the Schmalkaldic War in 1547; the war of Livonia; the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the civil war excited by Calvin, who might have been taken for a dictator; and finally the war of the Protestants properly so called, or the Thirty Years' War, which began in 1618 and lasted almost without interruption until the deplorable peace treaty so fatal to the Catholic religion in 1650.

How many thousands, and even millions, of victims fell in Europe by sword, by fire, and by plague? How many thousands of Catholics lost their lives in England, especially in the time of Elizabeth, by capital punishment and by other torments? The spirit of this heresy was so bloody that it did not even spare its own kings and princes. We find a horrible example of this given very recently by the Scots, who betrayed and delivered up their legitimate sovereign Charles Stuart, and by the English, who had him beheaded by public sentence without even hearing him.

Fourth, the heresy of Luther caused the Church and the Roman Empire three great and horrible evils, which may be compared to three plagues. The first was the confusion and darkening of the truths of faith, arising from mutually opposed errors whose variety is as astonishing as their number. The legitimate meaning of Scripture was almost entirely corrupted by Luther and his impious followers. Versions of the Bible were published in such great number, and so little in agreement with one another, that one no longer knew what one ought to believe or reject.

The second evil was like a great fire kindled in the minds of men, who reached such a degree of irritation that they were seen rising up against one another: states against states, kingdoms against kingdoms. So many horrible and cruel massacres, succeeding one another almost without interruption and for so long a time, cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of men. Such was the terrible consequence of that liberty - or rather that license - which was preached to the people in order to persuade them that neither men nor even angels had any right to impose laws on them, except insofar as they wished to accept them.

Celibacy was called tyranny. The power and jurisdiction of the sovereign Pontiff, of the bishops, and of the prelates of the Church were delivered over to contempt, and all ecclesiastical precepts were violated. Temporal princes were attributed the right to seize the goods of the principalities and dignities of the Church, leaving to priests only the right to be supported. Inferiors revolted against their superiors and shook off the yoke of the Lord. Ecclesiastics themselves stripped off their habit in order to marry. Princes and nobles began

to hate the sovereign Pontiff, the bishops, and the priests; they despoiled bishoprics, prebends, benefices, monasteries, and so forth. And when the emperor wished to prevent them, they took up arms and revolted against him.

Let him who desires to know this infamous tragedy better read the history of the events that followed one another from 1525 to 1650. But we have not yet seen the end of these evils in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and Germany will not be at peace for a long time. Whoever examines attentively and without passion the cause of these misfortunes will be forced to attribute it entirely to this dreadful heresy.

The third evil it produced was the corruption of all morals and of all discipline, both ecclesiastical and civil; for it is known that there is not a single point of morals, nor of anything that concerns good conduct, which Luther did not poison with his pestilential breath. From this one may conclude that this heresiarch did not make only a spiritual or moral war, but that, politically speaking, he attacked and overturned almost the whole Roman Empire.

Fifth, the language of Luther and of his followers was presumptuous, proud, and audacious to such a degree that it spared nothing, however holy it might be, nor any truth, even the most ancient and best established. His mouth, like the mouth of a lion, tore and devoured everything. He vomited, so to speak, sarcasm, contempt, and calumny against the authority of the sovereign Pontiff, and against the learning and virtue of the holy Fathers, sparing in his fury neither men, nor angels, nor even the Most Holy Trinity. To be convinced of this, one need only read his writings, and especially the public speeches he delivered in the assemblies of Worms, and in particular the one De Destructione, a book against the king of England.

Sixth, this heresy invaded, in a short time, not only all Germany, with the exception of Bavaria and Tyrol, but almost all the peoples of the North. It spread into France, Belgium, Hungary, and Poland. England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and almost all the imperial cities separated from the Latin Church. Like a devastating torrent, it dragged after itself the princes of the Empire, and acquired such an increase of strength and extension that in a short time it spread, and continues to spread, on land and sea, because its doctrine flatters the power and avarice of princes and the depraved taste of a carnal generation.

Satan, being able to do nothing by himself against the world, made use of Luther by divine permission; and Luther succeeded only too well in carrying out his infernal plans, because all flesh had corrupted its ways, and no one was any longer content to live according to his condition. The people sought license; princes and nobles coveted honours and riches; and the clergy, being disgusted with celibacy, gave themselves over to pleasures. Should one then be astonished that all these states accepted with such eagerness the flattering but perverse doctrine of Luther? It is to this perverted generation that Saint Paul addresses these words so full of truth, 2 Timothy 4:3: "There shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables."

Luther's assertions were so extravagant that every sensible man must be seized with astonishment at seeing such great monarchs enamoured of them. But alas, these princes multiplied for themselves, according to their desires, such teachers as flattered their pride and their covetousness, as they continue still to do.

Seventh, finally, this heresy of Luther distilled a still more deadly poison in pseudopoliticism and atheism, whose principal propagators were Machiavelli, Bodin, and others. Indeed, their works are held in veneration among princes, among nobles, and among many illustrious men who nevertheless glory in being Catholics. This new poison, disguised under appearances

flattering to the senses, infects and envenoms in the minds everything that the first errors, which are its elements, had left intact. Its pestilential essence has slipped into the counsels of princes, states, and republics, which it inspires, governs, and directs. By it men speak, think, tolerate, permit, and act wholly contrary to truth and justice.

This is the tail and the final consequence of this dragon and of his deadly doctrine. For Machiavelli and Bodin, and especially the followers of Calvin, gathered this essence of poison from the plants of the field of error, and made of it a mixture with the infernal spirit, in order to produce upon souls the effect which Luther himself had not been able to obtain. Indeed, it was by infusing this essence into minds and hearts that Lucifer succeeded in preventing the true reform and the conversion of the world to the Catholic faith.

By this means he made impossible the restitution of the goods of the Church; he taught men to dissemble the faith; and he saturated a great part of the nobility with false and abominable principles. By this he rendered useless all the efforts that were made, both by discussion and even by force of arms, to heal Europe and Germany in particular. So true it is that the wisdom - or rather the cunning - of this world easily prevails over men. Luke 16:8: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

We saw only too clearly fulfilled in Germany this oracle of Jesus Christ, Matthew 12:43: "When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation." We see indeed all modern heresies resolving into one alone and ending in pseudopoliticism and atheism.

Each man forms for himself, according to his pleasure, a conscience and a religion which he bases outwardly on his political principles. What else is the religion of pseudopoliticians and atheists but pure hypocrisy? For they say in their heart: "What does religion matter to me? God does not exist; He is a word. There is no other life than the present." And thus they mock the greatest truths.

It is of this impious race that the holy king David speaks when he says, Psalm 13:1: "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes. Shall not all they know that work iniquity, who devour my people as they eat bread?"

II. VERSE 13. And the sixth angel sounded the trumpet. This sixth angel was therefore Martin Luther, the prince of heresiarchs, and one of those who are described under the seven trumpets. He made his trumpet resound by declaiming against indulgences and by disseminating his horrible errors, through his speeches, writings, and followers, throughout almost all Europe. Against this heresiarch the Ecumenical Council of Trent assembled, under the emperors Charles V and Ferdinand, and under the sovereign Pontiffs Paul III, Marcellus II, Paul IV, Pius IV, and Pius V.

Luther was unanimously condemned as a heretic; his books had already been condemned at Rome on the seventh day before the Kalends of July, in the year 1520, and he himself had already been excommunicated by Leo X, the same pope who granted and caused indulgences to be published in Germany. The care of this publication had been entrusted to the elector of Mainz, who, according to custom, charged the Dominicans with it. This is what stirred up the

jealousy, avarice, and pride of Luther and his followers to the point of apostasy.

And I heard a voice coming out from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. VERSE 14. A voice saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet: Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates. By the altar, Saint John here designates the universal Church - or the prelates, bishops, doctors, and priests united with their head, the sovereign Pontiff. They are rightly called the altar, because it is in them and through them that the prayers and good works of Christianity are offered each day to God the Father, through Jesus Christ; and it is from this altar that the incense of repentance and sorrow rises up to heaven.

This is why this altar is called golden, because only the Church is continually illuminated by the eternal wisdom which gold represents. It is also said that this altar is before God, because the Catholic Church is always present to the eyes of the Lord, who guards and protects her in a wholly particular manner, and prevents her from falling into any error whatever, or from being conquered by any enemy. If her members make themselves guilty of some fault, He chastises and corrects them as a good Father, according to His promise contained in 2 Chronicles 7:15, concerning the temple of Solomon, which was the figure of the Catholic Church: "My eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen and sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually."

Thus, a thing that is before God signifies, according to Scripture, the Lord's guardianship, solicitude, care, and paternal love toward it. Such is the Church of Jesus Christ, which He acquired for Himself by His precious blood. We have an example of this solicitude and vigilance in the natural history of animals: who has not had occasion to admire in female birds their watchful eye and their protective wings over their young? This altar of which Saint John speaks in his text had four horns, to signify still more clearly the Church extending into the four parts of the world: East, West, North, and South.

And since the universal Church is the assembly of all the faithful of the world gathered under one head, who is our Holy Father the Pope; and since, each time she assembles in council, all the prelates and all the doctors of the world are convoked; for this reason we find these words full of meaning and truth in the Apocalypse: And I heard a voice coming out from the four horns of the golden altar. This voice was that of the holy Council of Trent, which came out from the four horns of the altar. It was one, because this council was general, and because it condemned with one unanimous voice and delivered to Satan the impious Luther with all his errors.

A voice saying to the sixth angel - to Martin Luther - who had the trumpet, and to whom God had permitted to preach, propagate, and disseminate, by himself and by his followers, the most numerous, varied, and clamorous errors which his unbridled passions, unconquerable pride, and incomparable audacity could produce. Loose the four angels. This is a manner of speaking used to provoke someone to combat and to declare war on him, when all other means of pacification have been exhausted in order to settle an urgent and necessary matter. This is how Jesus Christ acted when He saw that the devil had entered into the heart of Judas, who was to betray Him and deliver Him to the Jews. He said to him, John 13:27: "That which thou dost, do quickly."

And it is in the same way that we ourselves act when we see that there is no other means of escaping an enemy than by just defence. We prepare resolutely for combat and attack with fearlessness the enemy who insults us. This imperative expression, Loose, is therefore nothing else, in the meaning of the text, than a provocation to spiritual war against the fury of Satan and of all hell, which was making use of this heresiarch to try to exterminate the Latin Church. We have said that this expression Loose is imperative, effectively ordering the

sovereign Pontiff and the Council of Trent to pronounce a sentence of excommunication and condemnation against the impious Luther and his followers.

And this was the occasion which most inflamed his fury and stirred him up to the most shameful diatribes against the sovereign Pontiffs, against the holy councils, indulgences, celibacy, dignities, power, authority, and ecclesiastical goods. One may be convinced of this from his writings and speeches. Furthermore, this infernal enemy stirred up the princes of the Empire, the people, and even ecclesiastics against the pope, the bishops, and the prelates, always seeking, by every means, to exterminate the Church. This at least is clearly seen from the efforts that were attempted, and that are still attempted in our own day.

Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates. By the great river Euphrates one understands the Roman Empire, which is called a great river: 1. Because of the multitude of peoples composing it. For Europe, which belongs entirely to this empire, is very populous, according to these words of the Apocalypse itself, 17:15: "The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and nations, and tongues." 2. Because, just as the Euphrates was one of the four great rivers of the earthly Paradise, according to Genesis 2:14: "The fourth river is Euphrates," so also the Roman Empire was one of the four principal empires of the world, and even the greatest, the most powerful, and the most lasting, as is seen in Roman history and in the prophecies of Daniel 2.

How great was the power of this empire, which was like iron, and which, like iron, broke and subdued all the kings of the earth and made them tributary to itself, although at present this empire is very restricted and so divided that one sees only confusion in it, as the same prophet had foretold. 3. Just as the Euphrates is very great near its source, but afterward divides into various rivers and streams, so the Roman Empire was at first immense; then it diminished with time and divided into various kingdoms and republics which separated from it, either by rebellions, or by defections from the Catholic faith, or finally by some other circumstance, so that now there remains of it only a small portion, full of troubles, as we have said.

The number four is often used to express the totality of a thing. Thus we see in Saint Matthew 24:31: "He shall send his angels with a trumpet, and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds" - that is, all the elect. Now it is in the same way that one must understand, by the four angels of whom Saint John here makes mention, the universality of the wicked whom Luther summoned to make war on the Church of God. And these wicked persons are divided into two categories.

The first consists of the ecclesiastics whom this heresiarch recruited from among his own and from an infinity of other religious and secular orders, such as Carlostadt, Münzer, Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Calvin, and a great number of others. The second category is formed of the princes of the Empire and the so-called doctors of the Reformation, whom Luther loosed like fierce beasts and launched against emperors and kings, to overthrow churches and monasteries, and to seize ecclesiastical goods and bishoprics. He did all this especially in hatred of the sovereign Pontiff, bishops, and priests, and through aversion for the Church and the Catholic faith, which the holy Fathers, the Doctors, and all the saints who have always been her ornament had preserved pure and spotless through all ages and all the difficulties of the times.

The most perverse among these impious and aggressive princes were the Elector of Saxony, who abolished the bishoprics and all the monasteries of his states; the electors of Brandenburg, Heidelberg, and Brunswick; the Landgrave of Hesse; the kings of Sweden, Denmark, and England; and an infinity of other princes, dukes, marquises, counts palatine, barons, and nobles. The whole North, and even almost the whole Roman Empire in the East,

West, and North, were loosed against the Latin Church at the sound of the trumpet of this sixth angel, because none of them could endure the sound doctrine of the holy Council of Trent.

Loose the four angels who are bound by the power of the Empire. For these impious men were held back by the force and under the yoke of the power of God, which the Roman Empire represented; and they sought to break their chains while howling like chained dogs. Indeed, at that time, the princes of the Empire, the kings, and a great number of ecclesiastics resembled a furious dog and a stallion neighing, because of their unbridled passions and their thirst for riches and honours. But God, in His power, held them bound until the measure of the iniquities of the Roman Empire was full, and divine vengeance permitted these impious men to be loosed by Luther, in order to chastise this empire and its Latin Church.

Thus the text rightly says: Loose the four angels, to indicate divine permission, without which our enemies remain chained and incapable of doing harm. For a long time Germany, and even the Roman Empire, had nourished within themselves this principle of evil; and these dreadful disasters would have happened sooner if God had not delayed them in order to wait for sinners to do penance.

For all states and all conditions had corrupted their ways. Subjects no longer wished to obey. Ecclesiastics violated discipline, and, considering celibacy unbearable, cried out loudly for marriage. Princes and nobles, having become insatiable, coveted other honours, other riches, and other dignities. The sight of riches in prebends, bishoprics, and prelatures excited their avarice; and in their jealousy they conceived the deepest hatred against those who possessed them. To make themselves masters of these goods, they joined calumny to the scandals of which the clergy unfortunately gave so many examples. All men forgot God upon the earth and wallowed up to the neck in the mire of pleasures, honours, and riches.

Thus everything was disposed and prepared for a general ruin which God, in His mercy, restrained for a time, until He finally caused His anger to break forth. Such, until now, has been the fate of the Roman Empire and of the Latin Church, which began in the year 800 of the Christian era, the period when this empire passed to the Germans, and which continues to last until this day. We see, therefore, in their history, that from their origin until the year 1517 - that is, for the space of seven centuries - they were exempt from all heresy and all ruin, except only those of Berengarius and of a few other heretics of little importance whom we have mentioned.

For the hand of God held Satan bound; and all these heresiarchs, whom one may regard as the forerunners of the evil, as we have already said, never succeeded in exercising the furies of hell against the Church until the day of heavenly vengeance had come.

III. VERSE 15. And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, for to kill the third part of men. In these words follow the effects of the divine permission by which Luther obtained the great power of darkness to commit, with the greatest success, the horrible evils with which he so cruelly afflicted the Latin Church. For one must not attribute to him only the evil he did by himself to the men of his time; rather, one must consider him as the great guilty one and the first cause of all the disasters that his errors produced and will still produce later.

The first of these evils was the excitement which he stirred up in an almost infinite number of ecclesiastics of every rank and condition, teaching them by his doctrine to shake off the yoke of Church discipline, in order afterward to run through Europe like horses without a bridle, manifesting their carnal desires by horrible neighings and perverting millions of men by their scandals. The second of these evils was to excite, by speeches and writings, the princes of the Empire to the longest and most disastrous war that ever was or ever will be.

And the four angels were loosed. That is, permission was given to the universality of the impious and wicked, who were ready and as though enlisted under the banners of Lucifer, to whom they had sold themselves to do evil, as Ahab once did, 3 Kings 21, when he said to Elijah: "Hast thou found me thy enemy?" Elijah answered him: "Because thou hast sold thyself to do evil in the sight of the Lord."

We see such a prince in the person of Frederick V, who, together with his allies, caused the blood of Christians to be shed in such great abundance. Such also were Henry VIII, king of England; Elizabeth his daughter; and recently also Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, who, at the head of the Protestants, devoured almost all Germany to the marrow of its bones, after making it undergo the bloodiest outrages that can humiliate a nation. Only too well known is the horrible shedding of blood which this prince provoked, as well as his rapines, vexations, homicides, sacrileges, and other infamies. Now the first source of these incalculable evils, past and future, was the doctrine of Luther.

And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, etc. The Apostle designates by this the various epochs of the wars of Protestantism, whose moments are fixed to the hour, the day, the month, and the year, according as it pleases the divine will to permit the leaders of war to arrange and determine the execution of their plans. For to kill the third part of men. Here the Apostle indicates a determined number in order to speak in an indeterminate manner; and by this third part of men one understands the greater part of Christians who were and will truly be killed by these wars. By men, one understands indistinctly both good and bad, Catholics and the impious, whom these wars were to reach and must still reach.

By the hour, the day, the month, and the year, the principal epochs of the wars of Protestantism are specially designated. Thus the hour clearly indicates the Peasants' War, which lasted only a short time, and in which nevertheless 130,000 men were killed by the Swedish League and by Anthony of Lorraine. The hour also designates the civil wars in Switzerland, France, and Belgium, which were short but cruel. The day indicates the Schmalkaldic War, which was longer than that of the peasants, but which was nevertheless shortened by the emperor Charles V, celebrated for his brilliant victories over the most formidable enemies.

The month announces the violent war called the Thirty Years' War, which lasted from the year 1619 until 1649. These thirty years are indeed designated by the thirty days of the month; for it is known that among the prophets, one day counts for a year. Finally, by the year, the Apostle makes us understand all the wars and seditions that will take place in Europe until the extinction of this very cruel heresy.

VERSE 16. And the number of the army of horsemen was two hundred million. By this army, Saint John designates in general all the forces and all the troops which Europe, in a determined circumstance, has put on a war footing, and which it will continue to put forth through the four angels, because of this impious and bloody heresy. The number of these troops will surpass everything that one could believe or suppose concerning the resources of Europe. And yet it seems that this region ought already to be exhausted, if one considers all the bloody battles of which it has already been the theatre for one hundred and twenty-five years. For almost all kingdoms, principalities, and republics were drenched in blood as a consequence of these errors, as is seen from what precedes.

Now, if one adds together the numbers of all these troops, one will obtain an incredible number, which Saint John himself indicates by a prodigious figure in these terms: And the number of the army of horsemen was two hundred million. We say a prodigious figure, and the reader will agree with us if he considers the still more astonishing number of infantry

which this very numerous cavalry supposes according to the art of war. Thus the prophet does not express himself otherwise in order to say nothing superfluous, just as he announces only one army, although there have been and will be a very great number of armies.

His purpose is to make us understand that all these armies, however numerous and varied they may be, nevertheless form only one army, morally speaking, since all must tend toward the same end and serve the same cause, which is to fight for or against the principles of Luther. All these troops are an instrument in the hands of God to chastise this carnal age by the massacre of the third part of men. For I heard the number of them. By these words, the prophet wishes to make us understand that it is not by chance, nor without design, that he cites this determined number indicating another indeterminate number; rather, he himself affirms that this number of two hundred million was indicated to him, and that he thus heard it in spirit.

IV. VERSE 17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision. The prophet now passes from the description of physical evils to the description of the spiritual or moral evils of this heresy. First, he describes the manner in which he saw the nature and properties of this spiritual army. He says that the horses appeared to him in this way in the vision. Now this manner of seeing is purely intellectual, and perfectly suits its object, which is spiritual war; just as the other manner of hearing, which supposes a physical participation of the hearing, suited the first detail of material evils.

And thus I saw the horses in the vision. By the horses are understood the bad priests and the impious who, having shaken off the yoke of all discipline and having abandoned the bridle of their passions, renounced the Catholic faith and began to run like wild horses after Luther. The number of those who manifested their unbridled passions by a kind of neighing after the pleasures of the flesh was considerable, like that of a great army of cavalry.

First, just as a stallion set at liberty raises its mane, lashes its tail, foams, runs, neighs after its female, and becomes so untamable that it allows itself to be taken by no one, so these impious and sacrilegious men, who had not known how to preserve themselves as eunuchs through the fear of God, believing themselves loosed by Luther's doctrine from the bridle of ecclesiastical discipline, celibacy, and morality, began to raise the mane of their pride, to cast their foam against the Church of God, to pervert men, and to run after every pleasure of the flesh. They allowed themselves to be guided by no one, in order to satisfy their passions more freely, not thinking that they thus exposed themselves to being bound, after their death, in the eternal prison of hell.

One must also understand literally, by these horses, the preachers, or ministers of the Reformation, who have lived, still live, and will live to preserve and propagate Luther's subversive work. These are the teachers of whom Saint Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 4:3, and their number forms a great army. Second, stallions at liberty trample everything under their feet, even the most precious things they meet, because they are deprived of reason.

It is thus that Calvin, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Carlostadt, and an infinity of others, with Luther at their head - that is, the angel who loosed them - trampled everything under their feet. Like escaped horses, they ran through the garden of the Church which was in Europe, not sparing even the flowers of this garden, that is, the virgins who had vowed their life and blood to Jesus Christ in order to preserve their virginity. They dared to attack them by their impure solicitations, saying that they ought to abandon their state in order to marry.

They did not spare either the majestic and ancient trees of the holy Fathers, trees so fertile by their doctrine on the sacraments; nor the plantations, works, and embellishments of general and provincial councils; not even the gardeners in the continual succession of sovereign Pontiffs, from Saint Peter to the present pope, who remained firm and unshaken

like eternal monuments of truth, despite these injuries. They attacked and sought to devastate all the plants of the Church, which are as numerous as the miracles and virtues she has produced through the ages.

One finds a true, though unflattering, figure of this agreement of the impious in agricultural life: it is when a farm-master wants to put an iron ring in the snout of a pig to prevent it from doing harm; all the others run up at its cries and threaten the one who performs the operation. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: and they that sat on them had breastplates of fire, and of hyacinth, and of brimstone. By these words, the prophet indicates and describes the riders of these horses, who are none other than demons.

It is known, indeed, that Luther himself admitted in his writings that he had frequent relations with a demon who pushed him and spurred him, so to speak, to evil. It is the same with all his disciples and followers, and especially with those who deny the visible head of the Church in the present times. They all have demons who serve as leaders and direct them. For: a) he who rides a horse dominates it; b) he holds it tightly by the bridle and directs it where he pleases; c) he pricks it with his spur to excite it to run and to impress upon it all the movements he desires: sometimes he makes it advance, sometimes retreat, and sometimes caracole.

Now this is how the demons acted upon all the disciples and followers of Luther, under whatever form they appeared; and this is how they will act upon those who will appear later. For they always dominate them and direct them toward evil; and these, like tamed and supple horses, obey without shame the impulses of their riders, trampling underfoot morality, discipline, and the articles of faith.

If these horses are sluggish and without fire, their riders use the spur - that is, they inspire them with a false zeal and a kind of fury mixed with pride, arrogance, and envy, in order better to launch them into the course and to disseminate impiety more rapidly, under the false pretext and appearance of good and truth. It was at least under these appearances that they presented themselves to the imperial cities, and introduced themselves among princes, presenting to them the riches of the Church and saying to them, like the demon in the temptation of Jesus Christ: "We will give you all these things, if you fall down and adore us."

It was again in the same way that these horses ran their course in order to make their neighings resound in the ears of ecclesiastics, whatever their state might be, with this false and licentious interpretation of the passage of Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 7:9: "It is better to marry than to burn." By their rapid course, they propagated throughout Europe in a moment their lies so flattering to the passions of men.

But these horses submitted to their riders not only by their obedience and docility for attack, but also for flight. Heretics flee with aversion from everything contrary to demons. This is why they rejected with horror the sign of the cross, holy water, sacramental ceremonies, relics of the saints, and especially the real presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. Above all, they rejected the holy name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so terrible to demons, in consequence of that ancient enmity by which the divine prophecy is daily realised, Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

Now modern heretics manifest, by all their acts and gestures, this old and ancient rancour against the Woman whom angels and archangels venerate, whom kings, princes, and all generations have always praised and will always praise, according to Saint Luke 1:48: "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Next, just as the demons showed themselves, from the beginning, rebellious against God their Creator, and through jealousy pushed our first parents into disobedience, so these emissary horses shook off the yoke of

obedience toward the Holy Roman Church and excited the states of the Empire to revolt against their legitimate masters and against the sovereign Pontiff, true successor of Saint Peter and head of the universal Church.

Moreover, what is more odious and terrible to demons than the holy sacrifice of the Mass? Now the modern heretics, true precursors of Antichrist, made every effort to destroy it, and in fact rejected the continual sacrifice, as Antichrist will do, according to the prophecy of Daniel 12:11: "And from the time when the continual sacrifice shall be taken away," etc. The demons sigh only for the blood of Christians, and seek only homicides, discords, wars, seditions, and so forth; and they excite to these things the wicked whom they hold under their domination. Now is this not the true portrait of these emissary horses whom the trumpet of the sixth angel continually animates to slaughter and devastation, as we have seen above?

It follows clearly, therefore, from all that precedes, that the riders of these horses are the demons who dominate them and push them to evil. And one sees from the details that follow in the text, concerning the weapons and uniform of these riders, that the prophet designated these demons literally. For he adds: They that sat on them had breastplates of fire, and of hyacinth, and of brimstone. That is, they were remarkable by their breastplates of fire, smoke, and brimstone. Now these three things are found in hell; and the demons who dwell there and who come out from it to make war on Jesus Christ upon earth appear to shine, according to the text, in these breastplates, in order better to make us understand who these riders are.

For just as a king wears a breastplate of gold, an officer a breastplate of silver, and a soldier a breastplate of iron, each according to his rank and grade, so the demons wore a breastplate of fire, smoke, and brimstone. These words also indicate, literally, various kinds of breastplates which these demons wore on horseback in order to be more terrible in their attack against the Church of Jesus Christ. There are three kinds:

1. The zeal of implacable hatred and the black envy which Satan inspired, through his false doctors, in princes and great men against the Roman Church, against the sovereign Pontiff, against the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, prelates, religious orders, and in general against all the clergy. Daily experience shows us the incredible hatred and jealousy with which heretics are inflamed against the Church of Christ. This is a breastplate with which Satan knew perfectly how to arm his soldiers for battle. For a heart filled with hatred and aversion does not easily allow itself to be convinced and persuaded by sound doctrine, good counsel, or remonstrance. For this reason it is said in the text: They that sat on them had breastplates of fire. For just as fire burns and consumes, so the false zeal of hatred and envy consumes the hearts of heretics, and will burn them eternally.

2. The second kind of these breastplates is the confusion and attractive novelty of the doctrine of this heresy concerning faith and morals. For this reason it was not easy to combat it. Scarcely had one error been refuted when an infinite number of others, still more astonishing, arose. This was a new and very skilful stratagem which Satan employed in his war against the Latin Church; and with the help of this strong breastplate, he parried all blows and marched fearlessly and boldly against his enemy. This second breastplate had the colour of hyacinth, or of smoke; for hyacinth resembles darkened air, and this colour perfectly represents the confusion of Luther's errors.

Indeed: a) smoke is produced by fire; b) it darkens the air; c) it troubles the sight; d) it is confused and like a chaos: one cannot compress it, and if one disperses it on one side, it spreads on another; e) finally, it makes tears come from the eyes. Now such is modern heresy perfectly. a) It offers the picture of the most numerous and varied errors; and the resulting

confusion comes from the fire of jealousy and envy of heretics against Christians, for they take pleasure in teaching and practising, in hatred of the sovereign Pontiff and of the Roman Church, everything contrary to them.

b) This heresy darkened by its errors all Europe, whose faith had been pure and bright like the air on a beautiful summer day. c) It troubled and spoiled the sight - that is, the understanding and sound reason of men - to such a point that it was no longer possible to distinguish what was true doctrine and the path leading to eternal life. d) It is like a chaos of all the preceding errors which one has not succeeded in dissipating; and the more one wishes to make its clouds and vapours disappear, the more they rise up on all sides. e) It caused abundant tears to be shed, even tears of blood, particularly in Germany, and it will cause many more to be shed.

Now why did the prophet compare this evil to hyacinth and not to smoke? The reason is that, although the errors of this doctrine were in reality nothing other than smoke, they nevertheless appeared plausible outwardly and had an appearance of solidity. These emissary horses presented them under these false colours in order to make them accepted by carnal men, whose desires they flattered, at least for the present life. This is how demons are accustomed to present evil under colours and with reasons good in appearance, in order to succeed better in deceiving men. One sees, therefore, that it is with good reason that the prophet used these breastplates of hyacinth to depict these enemies of Christ and His Church.

3. The third kind of these breastplates was the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline and Christian morals, replaced by an entirely carnal life and licentious liberty. Thus Satan, by this heresy, opened the door to all vices and all pleasures, persuading men, through his ministers, that the path to heaven is very easy and covered with roses, and that God does not punish sin as rigorously as Catholics teach. He took care above all to preach the greatest liberty of the flesh, contrary to celibacy, religious orders, virgins, and priests.

Satan was like a fisherman who, by means of this heresy, spread a great net over the great waters of Europe and made an immense catch of fish, which he roasted in the eternal flames. And the stench of the smoke that came out of this fire of lust infected all Europe. It is with this third armour that Satan armed his riders, to whom he gave breastplates of brimstone. For brimstone metaphorically signifies the stench and infection of shameful sins. Such, then, were these three kinds of spiritual breastplates with which the demons were covered and armed in order to undertake this terrible war which Satan had declared against the Latin Church.

V. And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions. In these words and those which follow, the prophet passes to the description of the nature and properties of these horses. One will undoubtedly conceive of them as monstrous and horrible if one represents them with the belly, feet, and body of a horse, the head of a lion, an infernal mouth, and a tail formed of serpents. Nevertheless, this is what we are going to verify in detail.

First, it is said in the text that the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and this is justly said. For just as the head of the lion is very strong, and devours and tears with its teeth everything that presents itself to it, so these horses, animated by the sound of the trumpet of the sixth angel, dared to attack and devour with their cursed teeth almost all the articles of faith, however holy, authentic, and ancient they might be. They spared nothing that belongs to good morals; nor sacred things, nor sacramental ceremonies, nor the worship of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

As an enraged lion casts fiery looks, lets the foam of its rage fall from its mouth, makes the valleys resound with its dreadful roarings, and spreads everywhere it passes the terror of

slaughter and the fright of death, so these horses of impiety, animated by the fire of hatred, inflamed by the fury of envy, and burning with thirst for vengeance against the sovereign Pontiff and against all the prelates of the Church, tore and devoured with their lion's teeth all holy things and even the sacraments.

Second, the prophet adds: And from their mouths proceeded fire, and smoke, and brimstone. We have said that fire designates the ardour of jealousy, the zeal of hatred, and the black envy with which these horses were inflamed by the demons who rode them, and who launched them throughout Europe to make war against the sovereign Pontiff and the Latin Church. It is with this fire that they burned all the precepts of morality and all the dogmas of the Catholic faith. We have also said that they filled this same Europe with smoke and brimstone by the confusion of their doctrine, by the falsity of their morality, and by the stench of their licentious life.

Now, according to the text, these three horrors proceeded from their mouths - that is, they preached and disseminated them by their speeches and writings. For what else could they preach except that with which their hearts were filled? And with what could they be filled, if not with the evil which the demons inspired in them? Thus these emissary horses spread through their mouths what the demons who rode them carried as breastplates. Indeed, it is proper to demons to will the evil which Satan causes to be committed in the world by his ministers, who are the impious and the wicked.

And the mouth of the impious is like hell, from which proceed, and from which will proceed for all eternity, the fire, smoke, and brimstone which will devour these wicked ones for ever and ever. It is of these same impious men that David so well wrote, Psalm 5:10: "There is no truth in their mouth; their heart is vain; their throat is an open sepulchre; they dealt deceitfully with their tongues. Judge them, O Lord," etc. And Psalm 13: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known."

Third, the fire, smoke, and brimstone of the breastplates worn by the riders are called plagues: a) To signify the deadly influence they exercised in Europe upon the Latin Church by God's permission. For the measure of men's sins was full; all flesh had corrupted its ways; and all Europe had prostituted itself far from God its Lord, to pride, avarice, lust, all the pleasures of the flesh, and the happiness of the present life. It is as a consequence of this overflowing of sin that this heresy brought forth and produced a generation of men perfectly resembling itself, who became children of sorrow for the misfortune of the whole world.

b) These breastplates are called plagues because God cannot inflict a greater punishment upon a people or nation than by permitting it to abandon the true faith in order to fall into heresy. Therefore God, in His goodness and mercy, takes care to announce these terrible chastisements often one hundred or even two hundred years in advance, in order to stir up peoples to penance. And if they persevere in their vices and errors, He finally causes His wrath to break forth by a complete ruin. For, according to the expression of the Apostle, Hebrews 10:31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

And this is why the holy king-prophet warns us, Psalm 2:10: "And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth. Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto him with trembling. Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way, when his wrath shall be kindled in a short time." Fourth, there follows the great devastation caused by these three plagues.

VERSE 18. And by these three plagues was slain the third part of men, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. By the third part of men, one

understands here a considerable part of Christianity, which abandoned the true faith and perished by a spiritual death: either by the fire of jealousy, or by the venom of hatred against the sovereign Pontiff and against the Church and her ministers, whom these emissary horses rendered odious; or by the confusion of their doctrine and the diversity of their errors; or finally by the attractions of a voluptuous life and of a liberty of conscience without limit and without bridle.

Thus the prophet here indicates literally that the third part of men lost spiritual life because of this heresy, in the same way that he had said above, also literally, that the third part of men was physically killed. Now this spiritual death of a third of Christianity can easily be demonstrated by the number of kingdoms, provinces, or cities which were and still are infected, either totally or in part, by this abominable heresy. For if one compares the multitude of heretics in the world with the number of Catholics who have remained faithful, one will easily understand the greatness of the evil and the considerable ruin caused by this heresy, which must be deplored with tears of blood.

VERSE 19. Fifth, for the power of these horses is in their mouth and in their tails. These words indicate the cause of the evils which this heresy will continue to produce through the consequences of its principles, as already indicated by the conjunction for, which is placed at the beginning. a) The power of these horses is in their mouth, which they used to vomit calumny and falsehood against the sovereign Pontiff, against the prelates, and in general against the whole Church. They strove to render them odious, especially to princes and the nobility, seeking to persuade everyone that it was no longer fitting for ecclesiastics to possess dignities, principalities, and riches, because of the abuse they made of them.

By their artful speeches, and by the appearance of gravity and reason which they affected to give themselves, they deceived an innumerable multitude of persons of both sexes, of every state and every condition. It is by such means that they drew so many people to their sect, daring to boast that they were inspired and sent by God to shake off the yoke of the servitude of the devil. Such was their language against the Catholic Church. They also opened their mouth to blaspheme and to preach that the use of meat at meals is permitted every day, and that one is no longer bound by any precept of the Church.

Moreover, they taught and published throughout all Europe that one must not obey the Pope, and that celibacy must be abolished, and so forth. And because their doctrine, so disastrous for the Church, was generally accepted by kings, princes, nobles, imperial cities, and a great part of the people, the prophet rightly says that the power of these horses is in their mouth.

b) He also says that their power is in their tails. It must be observed that he indicates these tails in the plural, to say that there will be several and of various kinds. The first of these tails is hypocrisy and flattery, which they used as animals use their tails to flatter men; and these heretics used them to cover the turpitude and dissipate the stench of their doctrine and of their vices. The second tail was the princes, imperial cities, republics, and governments which they dragged after them into error and perdition, persuading them that they could, with a safe conscience, take or retain the goods of the Church, dignities, principalities, prebends, and bishoprics.

These ran after such teachers, who knew so well how to flatter their passions, as children run after nuts. Should one then be astonished if, supported by such powers, these horses, neighing and shaking their manes, dared and still dare to cast their foam with so much impudence against the Latin Church? This second tail also served them to hide their turpitude and to dissipate the stench of their heresy, in that the simple among the people, seeing the great and the learned, the rich and the lords, princes and governments themselves, accept and protect such a doctrine, could scarcely do anything but lose their

heads over it.

The third tail is pseudopoliticism and indifferentism, recently introduced into the world by Machiavelli, Bodin, and other philosophers, as well as atheism, which may be considered the final consequence of so many false and contradictory principles of this doctrine, and consequently also as the tail of these horses. For the tail adheres to the body, as the consequences of a principle result from the body of the doctrine. They are its final reason, as the tail is the last member of the animal. Just as the final solution of the great problem of the Catholic faith is God, so, by opposition, the final consequence of Luther's doctrine is the denial of God.

And this is why so many princes and rulers, finally persuading themselves of the contradictions and infinite variations of modern sects, and otherwise preserving the first leaven of hatred which Protestantism inspired in too great a number of them, even among Catholics, ended by believing in no other truth than religion and reason of state. They contented themselves with preserving exterior and apparent ceremonies in order to succeed better in keeping their peoples in submission; and they said with the impious in their hearts: "There is no God."

Sixth, the prophet next describes the nature and properties of these tails. He deliberately uses the conjunction because, in order to make the Latin Church clearly understand the cause of so many ruins and desolations. Because their tails are like to serpents, and have heads: and with them they hurt. a) The tails of these horses are compared to serpents because of the flatteries they use. For just as the serpent seduced our first parents in the earthly Paradise by flattery and made them eat the forbidden fruit, so the disciples of Luther seduced and continue to seduce peoples, flattering them in their desires and persuading them to eat forbidden meats and to give themselves without fear to pleasures and license.

For this purpose they employ lies as flattering as they are specious, even using, when needed, texts of Scripture whose meaning they falsify, saying for example, Matthew 15:11: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man," and 1 Corinthians 7:9: "It is better to marry than to burn." b) Moreover, serpents do not let themselves be caught easily; for if someone wishes to seize one, he runs great risk of being bitten and receiving a wound that is often mortal. Now such are the tails, or consequences, of the present heresy.

For who could boast of having grasped the cunning of heretics? Who will be able to uproot the false philosophy, false politics, and atheism that have slipped like poison even into the members of Catholics themselves? Glory to him who will be able to bring down from their chair those doctors of darkness who preach error and falsehood like vipers threatening death by their horrible hissings! Happy, finally, is he who will be able to seize and dominate, with God's help, the princes, kings, republics, imperial cities, and all the powers on which this error rests.

History teaches us that Ferdinand II, an emperor as pious as he was powerful, tried to do this, as did Ferdinand III; but alas, the result of their efforts was a horrible wound which they received in trying to seize these so formidable serpents. c) The nature of the serpent obliges it to crawl on the earth; and this is precisely what these heretics do, whose face, like that of the serpent, is continually inclined toward earthly things, seeking only honours, riches, and pleasures. d) According to Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made." So it is also with the present generation, which is the most cunning of all those that have existed until now.

It is certain that the Protestants employed against the Church the most refined cunning. One need only read, to be convinced of this, the acts of the chancery of Anhalt, as well as the decrees of their councils; there one will see everything that cunning inspired them to do

against Catholics and against the Roman Empire, and one will understand that the prophet does not compare them wrongly to the most cunning serpents.

e) If God, in His curse, established an enmity between the serpent and the woman, between the race of one and the race of the other, Genesis 3, one can then understand what enmity God permitted to exist between this new race of serpents and the Woman par excellence, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God made man, who will be blessed among all women. f) It is said that these tails have heads, to make us understand that the supporters and followers of this heresy would be kings, princes, and a great number of distinguished and powerful persons, who are in fact like the head, or chiefs, of peoples.

Moreover, it is not without reason that the prophet designates several heads, to signify that the dogmas of Protestantism, having no other basis than the principle of private judgment, would necessarily result in a multitude of diverse sects, since all authority capable of restraining false liberty of conscience was to be rejected. Is this not in fact what experience has unfortunately proved only too well, through so many scandalous controversies concerning the presence of Christ in all places, the communication of divine idioms, the number of the sacraments, the faith of children in the administration of Baptism, the use and ceremonies of the Mass in German, and so forth?

It was enough for a consistory or provincial council to admit and proclaim some rule on this subject, for other councils and consistories to reject it and even to turn it into mockery. Is this not evident proof that neither the one nor the other were supported by the infallible assistance and promise of the Holy Spirit, which would have prevented them from failing and dividing? These heads also signify human wisdom, intelligence, and prudence, by which this generation surpasses Catholics by far. For, according to Saint Luke 16:8: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Is this not what we have experienced especially at the beginning of this fifth age, seeing Protestants surpass Catholics by far in the art of dissimulation, of combining secret plans and laying traps; in the talent of acquiring riches and expanding commerce; of succeeding in negotiations; of perfecting systems of attack and defence for fortresses and places of war; in civil laws and regulations of external police; in the luxury of a brilliant education for youth; and so forth? Therefore, when the prophet tells us that they will have heads, he wishes to warn us of the considerable damage which this perverse generation will cause to the Church and to the Roman Empire.

And he completes the description of this heresy by saying: Their tails are like serpents... they have heads, and with them they hurt. That is, they will harm the Church and the Roman Empire especially with these three kinds of tails of which we have spoken above; and all the power and vigour of this heresy, when it is about to end, will consist in these three tails. Therefore, the one who succeeds in cutting off these tails will put an end to the existence of this heresy.

May God grant that there soon come that powerful monarch who must overthrow the republics, breach the imperial and maritime cities which are nothing other than nests of vipers, stifle the cries and hissings of these preachers and serpents, and, after having humbled heretics and schismatics, cause every error to cease! The prophet has written of no heresy with as much force and clarity, nor with comparisons so vivid, as the modern one, in order to make the Latin Church better know the evils that will result from it.

By making this monster pass before our eyes, the Apostle warns each one of us, in particular, to remain faithfully attached to the Roman Catholic faith, and to walk with sobriety, chastity, piety, and holiness in the presence of this horrible beast, lest our ministry be turned to mockery and degraded. Moreover, the prophet warns us to avoid lust, the pleasures of the

table, pride, impurity, avarice, and ostentation, lest the weak among us take scandal from them. We must, on the contrary, strive to shine by our life and doctrine like a light in the darkness.

Let us observe the discipline of the Lord, lest His anger break forth, and lest He permit everything that we still possess in Europe to be devoured by this hideous beast.

§ 4. Summary of the Evils Caused by Bad Catholics Themselves. Chapter 9, Verses 20-21

I. VERSE 20. And the rest of the men who were not slain by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not adore devils, etc. This text contains an admirable summary of the considerable evils which we, Catholics, have caused to the Church by our perverse works. For although we have remained in the true faith, we have almost allied ourselves with the beast, in order to fight against our holy Mother the Church. And the rest of the men - that is, the remnants of the Catholics - who were not slain by these plagues, who did not abandon the true faith.

And the rest of the men. This construction does not at first appear complete, because there is no verb and predicate. But one must know that this verb and predicate do nevertheless exist, and are found in the words of the preceding text: And they have heads with which they hurt. In Latin, the connection is clearer because of the pronoun illis, which applies to all three genders, unlike the French pronoun, which is feminine. The rest of the men are therefore also the subject of the verb to hurt, which is found in the preceding verse; and the predicate is found in the word with which - that is, with these heads with which the rest of the men hurt.

By this connection of phrases, the prophet shows us in an admirable manner the connection, or at least the close approximation, which almost united the remnants of the Catholics with the Protestants. Consequently, the prophet wishes to make us understand that we too, bad Catholics, would bring our share of wood to that horrible fire which was to set Europe ablaze. And the evils of which we will make ourselves guilty against the Church are divided into two kinds.

The first is that so-called wisdom and serpent-like cunning which presides in the counsels of the powers of the age, and inspires them to oppress the Church by depriving her of her immunities; by making use of all kinds of false and specious titles to encroach upon the spiritual power; by burdening the revenues and even the persons of ecclesiastics, corporations, seminaries, and so forth, with taxes; and by taking from them their rights, revenues, tithes, and so on. And if the Church, on her side, threatens them with excommunication, or even pronounces sentences of this kind, they laugh, mock at them, and persevere in their sin.

Is this not the worst sign that the whole of Europe is on the slope of its ruin and prevarication? Indeed, is there a worse sign in a child than when he mocks the rod with which his mother threatens him? Now it is especially in this that bad Catholics draw near to heretics, since they do in an occult and hidden manner what the latter did openly and with such noise. Today they seize what their fathers founded with pious intention; but they do not become richer for that. On the contrary, they continue to be in need and in financial embarrassment, because the blessing of God is not upon them.

To all these robbers are addressed these words of the Wise Man, Proverbs 11:24: "Some distribute their own goods, and grow richer; others take away what is not their own, and are always in want." May these latter be persuaded to cease as soon as possible this usurpation

of ecclesiastical power, these exactions, these taxes, this oppression of the clergy; and may they at last begin to fear the sword of the Church, which is terrible, since it draws the curse of God upon their families and upon their children's children.

We have a terrible example of this in Charles Stuart, king of England, whose predecessors claimed to be heads of the Church. That unfortunate man had to be beheaded and to lose his crown because of the curses which Henry VIII and Elizabeth had drawn upon that unhappy dynasty. It is thus that God punishes the crimes of men to the third and fourth generation.

The second kind of evils which Catholics caused to the Church their mother are the great sins of princes, clergy, and people, for the expiation of which no penance has been done, according to the expression of the prophet himself. For he adds: VERSE 21. And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

It is already because of our enormous sins that God permitted this fatal heresy in Germany and in a large part of Europe; and it is because we continue to sin that He permits it to last so long. For to what other cause can one attribute such a sad result from the efforts of the emperor Ferdinand II for the reform of the faith and the restitution of the goods of the Church, if not to our sins? This prince had in his hands all the means to succeed. His work had begun well, and he had even already strengthened it by brilliant victories. And yet, because of the sins of Catholics, what resulted from all this, if not a peace treaty which compromised their situation still more?

It is therefore because of the vices to which we continue to abandon ourselves, and for which we do not wish to do penance after having recognised and confessed them, that God, in His anger, prevented this reform of the faith and this restitution of the goods of the Church which we had begun in an insufficient manner, since we did not add to it the reform of our morals. In this the Lord acts like a father gravely offended by the unworthy conduct of his son, whom he disinherits by tearing up the testament which he had made in his favour.

That they should not adore devils, and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. These words specify seven enormous sins which are the cause why God has no pity on Europe, and why He does not raise up the Church oppressed under the yoke of heretics.

The first sin is the hidden idolatry of the superstitious, with which Europe, and especially Germany, abounded before the last war, and which is already beginning to reappear. Those who give themselves to these superstitions maintain secret commerce with demons whom they adore in these abominations, as the Gentiles formerly adored them in idols; and it is in this way that they forget God their Creator. Now this is an enormous sin, which the text expresses in these terms: That they should not adore devils.

The second sin is avarice, which is abominable before the Lord. The prophet depicts it metaphorically under the figure of idolatry, saying: Idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood. Just as the pagans made most of their idols from gold, silver, brass, and so forth, so the men of this age attach value and love only to these futile objects, and make of them the idol of their heart plunged in avarice. In these objects designated by the prophet, all the others are contained; and the reasons why he calls avarice an idolatry are the following:

a) Because it is proper to the prophets to designate such things by enigmas and metaphors. b) The Apostle Saint Paul also calls avarice an idolatry, because the one is as great a crime as the other. Ephesians 5:5: "Know ye this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person - which is a serving of idols - hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." c) Just as idolatry causes apostasy, so those who wish to become rich, according to Saint Paul, fall into the snares of the devil.

1 Timothy 6:9-10: "They that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of Satan, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith." Now is this not what we saw in Europe, and especially in Germany, where several princes and other illustrious persons abandoned the faith because of their covetousness for the goods of the Church? The avaricious are idolaters who adore coins as idols, placing all their confidence in riches, and committing fornication with them by forgetting God and despising divine and human laws.

d) Just as nothing is more vain, more vile, and more imperfect than idols, so even the smallest gnat ought seemingly to be held in far greater esteem than gold, silver, wood, brass, and stone, for which, nevertheless, men abandon God their Creator and the Being par excellence. Thus the prophet expresses his astonishment at this folly by these words: Idols of gold and silver, etc., which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk.

The third sin is envy, hatred, anger; quarrels, unjust lawsuits, the desire to dominate, and covetousness; and also unjust wars, from which innumerable murders result. Does not Europe in general abound in homicides of this kind? How many unjust wars there have been - among which we shall mention only that of Mantua, that of France against the Roman Empire in support of the Protestants when Ferdinand II wished to introduce the reform of the faith and restore the goods of the Church; and finally, was not the war against the king of Spain undertaken through deep jealousy?

Men wish to be Catholic, but they do not wish to live as Catholics. They will even, when needed, support the enemies of the faith by arms, by bad counsel, and by money, with no motive capable of legitimising such alliances except self-interest. How many other unjust wars have been undertaken! How many homicides have been committed in so many revolutions! O sinners that we are, when shall we finally recognise our crimes? This is why the prophet adds: And they did not repent of their murders.

The fourth sin is particular homicide. How many assassinations, indeed, have we not to deplore? How many pregnant women destroy their fruit? How many mothers - O horror of nature! - are cruel enough to shed their own blood, the blood of the innocent? How many poisonings, hidden or known, in society and in families! This is what the text expressly indicates: They did not repent... of their sorceries.

The fifth sin is that of the flesh, expressed in these terms: And they did not repent... of their fornication. Here the prophet indicates the species for the genus; but his word includes all sins of lust in general, with which the world is so defiled that one may well apply to it those words which Scripture addresses to the men who lived before the flood: "All flesh had corrupted its way." Ah! Here, it is not words, but tears, that we need.

The sixth sin is the injustice that reigns everywhere, which the prophet indicates by these words: And they did not repent... of their thefts. Here again he cites the species for the genus, as there are many examples among the prophets. By thefts, then, he understands injustice in general, in which are enclosed all kinds of robbery, of whatever nature they may be. Now, who does not have cause to complain of injustices done to him in this kind - or at least who has not been threatened by them? But are there many among these robbers of another's goods who finally recognise their wrongs and repair their injustices? Do they not, on the contrary, seek to increase their fortune still more by every means, just or unjust - it matters little to them - inspired as they are by their insatiable avarice?

The seventh sin of this age, which must be considered as the completion of our perdition, is final impenitence, expressed so clearly by the prophet: And the rest of the men... did not repent of the works of their hands. And further down: They did not repent of their murders,

etc. Such is the final sentence pronounced by Saint John, the archchancellor of the dread counsels of God.

O priests and laypeople of all Europe, and especially of Germany, let us finally open our eyes to see the terrible danger that threatens us! God has cast a glance of anger upon the Church His daughter; and for more than one hundred years, war, plague, famine, dissensions, heresies, schisms, revolutions, and diseases of every kind have afflicted and overwhelmed us. And we do not do penance for all this.

We persevere in the criminal pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh. We are still panting with thirst for perishable goods, and swollen with the pride of life. The eyes of our souls are obscured by our passions and cannot see the abyss into which we are rushing.

Ah, let us finally awaken from our sleep of death! For the love of Jesus Christ, who loved us even to the sacrifice of Calvary; for the love of our souls; and for the love of those who will come after us, let us all together make an effort of salvation, lest the Lord finally allow us to fall into the depths of the abyss over which we are suspended; and lest the horrible beast devour this beautiful Europe, with no one left who can save us. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

The Angel and the Little Scroll

Revelation 10:1–11:3

On Chapters Ten and Eleven - Of the Great Consolation of the Latin Church in Her Sixth Age, After the Extirpation of Heresies; Of the Persecution of Antichrist; and of the Seventh and Last Trumpet

Section I: On Chapter 10 - Of the Consolation of the Latin Church, of Her Future Exaltation, and of Her Extension

§ 1. On the Consolation of the Latin Church and Her Future Exaltation in the Sixth Age. Chapter 10, Verses 1-11

VERSE 1. And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head. In the needs and calamities of the times, divine goodness has always been accustomed to come to the aid of His Church by consolations and timely assistance, lest she should succumb beneath the efforts of her enemies. For God has promised to be with her until the consummation of the ages, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

This promise He manifested in an admirable manner in the fifth age - in that age of desolation and evils - by granting powerful help to His Church, especially amid the greatest dangers. 1. By opposing to Luther and his fatal heresy a powerful warrior: Saint Ignatius and his Society. 2. By convoking, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the holy Council of Trent, to clarify the dogmas of the faith and to restore ecclesiastical discipline, and especially celibacy, which were on the point of disappearing. 3. By granting the Church, in the midst of her distress and defections, a great consolation, and by supplying her, in other parts of the world, with as many faithful as she was losing in Europe.

For precisely at that time of abandonment, at the beginning of the fifth age, God caused the faith to flourish and made its torch still more brilliant and more shining, as though to defy the powers of hell, by procuring innumerable conversions in America, Asia, the Indies, China, Japan, and several other regions. 4. Moreover, He has always protected His Church down to our own days by giving her zealous sovereigns, among whom the most distinguished was the Emperor Ferdinand II. But all this assistance was not sufficient to exterminate the horrible beast we have described, as experience proves only too well.

And because we have not yet reached the end of our evils, Saint John, after having indicated their principal cause and the chief events connected with them, now comes, in this chapter, to the description of that great Monarch whom we have announced above. See Book One, Section III, Chapter 3, § II. We are now going to witness the great scene of the sixth age of the Church, in which we shall see that, after the heretics have been humbled and converted, the Church will enjoy the greatest consolation; the empire of the Turks will be profoundly humiliated; the Catholic faith will shine upon land and sea; and ecclesiastical discipline will

be restored and perfected.

II. Before coming to the exposition of the text, it must be observed that this angel who appeared to Saint John was a true angel of God, of the most distinguished nature. He was a tutelary and protecting angel of the Roman Empire, or of the great Euphrates. This angel exercised the office of two persons. The first represented the person of the great Monarch to come, whom Saint John describes by these words: And I saw another mighty angel. The second was the person of the angel himself, who, in his capacity as heavenly ambassador, revealed to Saint John the future secrets of the Church.

It is to this second person that these words in the text refer: And the angel whom I had seen standing upon the sea and upon the earth, etc., until the end of the chapter. Thus we see in Exodus 3:2 that the angel who appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush also exercised the office of two persons. The first represented God; and the second was that of the angel who, in his capacity as heavenly messenger, manifested to Moses the decrees of the divine will concerning the children of Israel.

And I saw. We have explained in Book Two how prophets see persons and things in the future. And I saw another angel. 1. This angel is designated by the pronoun another to show that he will be entirely the opposite of the preceding ones, who were Luther and his forerunners. For this other angel will admit only one pure doctrine, and he will be very zealous for the Catholic faith, one and orthodox, especially after having humbled and dispersed the heretics on land and sea. His morals will be holy and well regulated.

He will contribute powerfully to the propagation of the faith and to the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline, which the angel who preceded him - that is, the heresiarch Luther, together with his impious adherents - had so greatly ruined and weakened. 2. Saint John attributes to this other angel the special quality of being strong or powerful. And I saw another mighty angel, etc. He will be powerful in war and will break all things like a lion. He will become very great through his victories, and he will thereby be more solidly established upon the throne of his empire.

He will reign many years; and during the course of his reign, he will humble the heretics and the republics, and he will subject all nations to his empire and to that of the Latin Church. Moreover, after having relegated to hell the sect of Muhammad, he will break the Turkish Empire, and will allow only a very small state to remain from it, without power and without strength. This state, however, will maintain itself until the coming of the son of perdition, who will not fear the God of his fathers and will not concern himself with any god. Daniel 11:37.

3. And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. The prophet says that this angel will come down from heaven because he will be born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, here understood as heaven; and he will be specially sent by God according to the decrees of divine Providence, which will have chosen him for the consolation and exaltation of the Latin Church, in the midst of her great affliction and deep humiliation.

4. And I saw another angel... clothed with a cloud. The prophet depicts this Monarch as clothed with a cloud to teach us that he will be very humble, and that from childhood he will walk in the simplicity of his heart. For the cloud which covers the brilliance of splendour signifies humility; and humility attracts the protection of God, which is also signified by the cloud that will cover this Monarch. Indeed, no one is so protected by God as he who walks in the ways of humility, according to Luke 1:52: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." This is why no one will be able to harm him or resist him, since he will be clothed with the protection of the God of heaven.

5. And I saw another angel... clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head. By the rainbow is understood the peace which God will make with the earth, according to Genesis 9:13: "I will set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between me and the earth." Now a covenant supposes peace; and it is this peace which this Monarch will restore to the universe. For after having extirpated the heresies and the superstitions of the Gentiles and the Turks, there will be only one sheepfold and one shepherd.

All princes will unite themselves to him by the strongest bonds - by the bonds of the Catholic faith and of friendship - because this Monarch, without abusing his power and without offending anyone by injustice, will render to each one what is due to him. This is why the prophet says that he will have, as an ornament, a rainbow upon his head.

6. And his face was as the sun. This is because of the splendour of his justice and of his imperial glory, and also because of the high intelligence and deep wisdom that will distinguish him. It is also because of the ardour of his charity and zeal for religion. Finally, it is because he will be like the sun amid the stars; that is, he will walk in his empire amid his allied princes, who will execute his wills and follow in his footsteps, etc.

7. And his feet as pillars of fire. The feet signify the extent and power of an empire, according to the Psalmist, Psalm 59:8: "Moab is as the pot of my hope; into Edom will I stretch out my shoe. The aliens are become my friends." Nevertheless, since many tyrants had very vast and powerful empires, the prophet attributes particular properties to this Monarch in order to distinguish him: And his feet as pillars of fire.

Pillars are the supports and props of a building; and fire indicates zeal for religion and the ardour of charity toward God and neighbour. Likewise, fire is an element which subdues everything. Now such precisely will be the power of this Monarch. His reign will be the strongest support of the Catholic Church and of his royal house, because his reign will be secured for his posterity until the apostasy has arrived and the son of perdition has appeared. The power of this Monarch will shine especially by his zeal for religion and by the fire of his charity toward God and neighbour; and just as fire subdues everything, so this sovereign will subdue everything and will rule.

III. VERSE 2. 8. And he had in his hand a little book open. This little book denotes a general council, which will be the greatest and most celebrated of all. The prophet says that this angel holds this little book in his hand because it is by the work and power of this Monarch that this council will be assembled, protected, and brought to a good end; and also because he will employ all his power to have its sentences and decrees executed. The God of heaven will bless him and will place all things in his hands and in his power. It is said that this little book will be open because of the clarity with which this council will explain the meaning of Holy Scripture, and because of the purity of the dogmas of faith that will be proclaimed there.

9. And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth. That is to say, this Monarch will enlarge and extend his empire on land and sea; for he will subject the earth and the islands of the seas to his dominion. The greatness and extent of his power will be immense, as we have explained above in saying that it is signified by the feet.

VERSE 3. 10. And he cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth. The force of his voice, compared to the roaring of a lion, makes us understand the immense terror which he will inspire in all the peoples of the earth and in the inhabitants of the islands. For when the lion roars, he manifests his strength, and all the other animals are seized with fright. This is why it is said in Proverbs 20:2: "As the roaring of a lion, so also is the dread of a king." The loud cries of his voice will also be his imperial edicts, by which he will command that the ordinances of the council be executed in all rigor, in favour of the Catholic and orthodox

faith. And his edicts will reach all the nations of the earth and of the islands.

IV. And after he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. These thunders, which will make themselves heard at the voice of this angel, will be the murmurs, protests, and cries of those who will wish to resist the will of this Monarch and strike him. For at that time a great tempest will arise. But because they will not be able to resist him, and still less to harm him, Saint John is commanded not to write what he saw in this circumstance; for this whole tempest will have no effect.

Jesus Christ wishes only to warn Saint John, in his capacity as representative of the Church, in order to let us know that the empire of this Monarch and the propagation of the true faith upon earth will not be obtained without noise and without storm. This is why it is said: And after he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. When thunder merely makes its voice heard, it is a sign that the lightning does not strike, because the cloud has burst in the air; but the storm sometimes produces its harmful effect according as the lightning falls upon men, animals, trees, or buildings.

Now the tempest shown to Saint John under the figure of a storm was a tempest with no effect other than the voice of thunder. Seven thunders uttered their voices. That is, princes and great men will rise up against this Monarch and murmur. They will make their voices heard on the occasion of this council, in order to resist him and to strike its decrees; but because this Monarch will be under the protection of God, all their efforts will be vain and useless.

V. VERSE 4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write. That is, after the secrets of the counsels of these resistant princes had been revealed to me, says Saint John, I was about to write them by virtue of the command which I had received. And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken, and write them not.

There are two reasons why someone should not know or should not write something. The first is when such knowledge could be harmful, by causing evil or preventing good, whether in the present or in the future. The second is when the importance, usefulness, or necessity of the thing does not require that it be known or written. It is in this way that divine Providence hides from His faithful friends, in this life, the dangers and tribulations of body and soul, whose number is almost infinite; for it would not be useful for men to know them beforehand.

And God, in His goodness, knows how to preserve us from them or defend us against them at the proper time, however great and imminent the evils of life may be. For the same reasons it was not permitted to Saint John to write the voices of the seven thunders concerning this Monarch. For God will deliver him from every danger and will make the designs of his enemies fail, etc. Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken, and write them not. That is, write that seven thunders uttered their voices, but do not write what they said.

VERSE 5. And the angel whom I had seen standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. Now comes the other person whom this angel represented; that is, there is no longer question here of the Monarch, but of the heavenly ambassador revealing the divine secrets concerning the end of times. And the angel whom I had seen standing upon the sea and upon the earth - that is, the supreme president, guardian, and protector of this empire, whom Daniel 12:7 saw standing upon the waters of the river - lifted up his hand to heaven.

VERSE 6. And he swore by him who liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in heaven, the earth and the things that are on the earth, the sea and the

things that are in the sea. These words contain a testimony supported by an oath concerning what the Lord God reveals to the whole human race through His heavenly ambassador, for the consolation of His elect and for the terror of the impious. This angel swears, by these words, a truth of the highest importance: namely, that there should be time no longer.

Literally, this passage is explained: 1. By the heretics and the enemies of the Cross and of Christ, because their time, their days, and their impiety will end under the empire of the announced Monarch. It is for their terror and eternal confusion, and at the same time for the great consolation of the Latin Church and of the faithful who compose her, that this angel proclaims this solemn testimony: That there should be time no longer.

2. These words also signify that after the voice of the seventh angel who will sound the trumpet - that is, Antichrist - there will no longer be time for labour and tribulations. And he announces this to console and strengthen the faithful against the impious, of whom it is written in 2 Peter 3:3-4: "Knowing this first, that in the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying: Where is his promise or his coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

This is why this angel confirms, by this solemn oath, the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the times of sorrows and persecutions for the good will cease, but also the times of pleasures, triumphs, honours, riches, glory, and all the charms of the present life for the wicked.

VI. VERSE 7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound the trumpet, etc. The description of this seventh angel and of the sound of his trumpet is found in the following chapter. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel. These words designate the end of times, after which there will be no other times for all eternity. For on that day the consummation of the age will take place, and immediately afterward will come the universal judgment.

This is why the text adds: And he swore... that... the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared by his servants the prophets. For: 1. The day of the consummation of the age and of the universal judgment is truly a very great mystery reserved to God alone - a mystery which has never been and never will be revealed to anyone until it is accomplished, according to Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour no one knoweth, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone."

2. This mystery known to God alone is great because all the most hidden secrets of our hearts, both in general and in particular, will be manifested on the great day of Almighty God, according to the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 3:13: "Every man's work shall be manifest: for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." And 1 Corinthians 4:5: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from God."

3. This mystery is the resurrection of the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet," etc.

4. This mystery is the remuneration of good or evil; and it will remain impenetrable to our eyes until the Lord God comes. Apocalypse 22:12: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works." This is certainly a great mystery, by which the holy king David was moved, and by which all the just who will live in this age will be moved amid their tribulations.

Psalm 72:1: "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart! But my feet were almost moved; my steps had well-nigh slipped. Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners. For there is no regard to their death, nor is there strength in their stripes. They are not in the labour of men: neither shall they be scourged like other men. Therefore pride hath held them fast: they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were from fatness: they have passed into the affection of the heart... I studied that I might know this thing; it is a labour in my sight, until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their last ends."

5. Finally, it is a mystery of God alone to know the choice of the elect from the mass of the children of Adam; and this too is a mystery hidden from the eyes of men, which no one will be able to penetrate until the day of the Lord. Romans 11:25: "For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery - lest you should be wise in your own conceits - that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in." Then finally the Apostle Saint Paul concludes: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!"

From this it follows that one must not tire oneself in vain by wishing to fathom the great question of predestination. It is a mystery reserved to God alone until the day of judgment, when He will render to each one according to his works and according to each one's labour. For God is just, and iniquity cannot reach Him. He does not will the death of the sinner, but above all He wills that he be converted and live.

Many men weary themselves by straining their minds over this difficult point, and exhaust themselves like the spider when it spins its web. It would be much more useful for them to pray to the Lord their God, to seek to conceive holy thoughts about His goodness, and to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Since this secret and this mystery of God is impenetrable, the more one scrutinises it, the more one sinks into difficulties, especially if one believes he understands it.

As he hath declared by his servants the prophets. These prophets, servants of God, are Moses, Enoch, Elijah, and all the other prophets of the Old Testament. They are also the Apostles, and all the other doctors and preachers of the New Testament, who all, by common agreement, each in his own language and writings, announced to the world this great mystery of the kingdom of God.

They preached it as it is still preached and announced in our day, and as it will be preached and announced until the end of the world. When this mystery is accomplished, men will not believe in that day until it arrives. So it was in the time of the flood: when Noah announced it to the world for more than one hundred years, the men of his time refused to believe his word. This is why Jesus Christ says to us in Matthew 24:37-39: "As in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and they knew not till the flood came and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be."

VII. VERSE 8. And I heard the voice from heaven again speaking to me, and saying: Go, and take the book that is open from the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. VERSE 9. And I went to the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the book. And he said to me: Take the book, and eat it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.

VERSE 10. And I took the book from the hand of the angel, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. VERSE 11. And he said

to me: Thou must prophesy again to many nations, and peoples, and tongues, and kings.

Saint John, here representing the moral person of the whole Church, instructs us by these words concerning the quality and effects of this book of which we spoke above; and he demonstrates these things to us by a metaphor drawn from the act of eating. Indeed, it is by the taste and digestion of foods that we know and experience their quality and effects. For many things are sweet and agreeable to the taste, while they are bitter and difficult to digest, and vice versa.

Now this is also verified in heavenly and spiritual things. For example, we read willingly and speak with delight of the tribulations and sufferings of the holy martyrs. We praise and admire the life of the saints, their heroic virtues, their irreproachable conduct, their sacrifices, their self-denials, and so forth. But if we must swallow a single drop from their chalice, it immediately produces an unbearable bitterness in our inward parts; and the digestion - that is, the practice and imitation of their life - seems hard and too burdensome to us.

One distinguishes, from the context and from the beginning of the following chapter, four other qualities of this book: 1. It contains sound, unanimous, and holy doctrine in matters of faith and good morals. This quality is signified by these words: It was in my mouth sweet as honey. These words contain a metaphor. For just as honey is sweet in the mouth of men, so pure doctrine and holy morality are sweet in the mouth of the just, while they are bitter as gall in the mouth of the wicked.

Hence this passage of Psalm 118:103: "How sweet are thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth." Isaiah 7 also says of Jesus Christ: "He shall eat butter and honey, that he may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good." Now, since this book will be the work of the Holy Spirit, it is with reason that Saint John says that it will be sweet as honey in the mouth of the whole Church, whose representative he is; that is, it will be received with acclamation and unanimous consent.

2. It will produce a great commotion, for this work of God will not be realised without great difficulties or without resistance. It will even be watered with the blood of martyrs; for the world, the flesh, and the devil have always resisted, and will always resist, the works of God. And divine wisdom permits this in order better to make this thought of the Wise Man stand out: Proverbs 21:30: "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord."

This tempest will first be raised by the secular powers, who will resist the great Monarch by arms, and will persecute those who undertake to convert peoples to the Catholic faith, which the Monarch will order to be preached on land and sea, etc. This is why it was said above that after this angel, standing upon land and sea, had cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. See what was said above on verse 4.

3. The execution of this council will also experience great difficulty on the part of bad priests, when the Venuses must entirely disappear, as well as the idols of gold and silver and the idle life. And all these difficulties are expressed by these words: But when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. As we have said, Saint John here represents the person of the whole Church, which will have to suffer bitterness, tribulations, and many difficulties in the execution of this council. But these evils will not prevail, and the enemies of the Church will not be able to prevent the great work of God from being accomplished.

4. It is to console and reassure the Church that the heavenly envoy immediately adds the third effect of this book, which will be the preaching of the Gospel and of the Catholic faith to nations, peoples, men of various tongues, and many kings; that is, in the countries which

Mohammedanism, schism, Protestantism, or any other sect had separated from the bosom of their mother, who is the Roman Church. This is expressed by the following words: And he said to me: Thou must prophesy again to many nations, and peoples, and tongues, and kings.

These words are addressed to the Church, whom Saint John represents. And the Church will preach by the voice of those whom she will send to the peoples who had already known the light of the Catholic faith, but who defected. For this is what the words indicate: Thou must prophesy again. That is, at the end of times, the Catholic faith must again be preached to the nations, peoples, men of various tongues, and many kings who abandoned the Church, etc.

This is indeed what will happen in the sixth age, which will be an age of consolation, and which will last until the seventh and last age, which will be the age of consummation.

§ 2. On the Extension and Exaltation of the Church. Chapter 11, Verses 1-2

VERSE 1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and it was said to me: Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that adore therein. I. These words express the fourth effect of the book announced above. Its purpose will be the preaching of the Gospel by the aid of divine mercy; that is, the conversion of almost the whole universe to the one, true, apostolic, and holy Catholic faith.

For the Latin Church will extend herself far and wide, on land and on sea; and she will be consoled and glorified. Saint John is ordered to measure her in order to signify her immense extent, and the multitude of peoples who will come even from afar and flow toward her from the ends of the earth. It is thus written in Genesis 15:5: "The Lord brought Abraham forth abroad and said to him: Look up to heaven and number the stars, if thou canst. So shall thy seed be." Now it is in the same way that Saint John says here:

1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod. One uses a measuring rod to measure buildings, fields, and other things also, in length, breadth, and depth - in a word, surfaces and solid bodies. It is in the same sense that bishops use the staff of their crozier, as though to measure the pavement and the walls of temples and churches in the ceremony of consecration. And it is this same rod, like a measuring reed, which was given in spirit to Saint John, to signify metaphorically that immediately before the last times the Church will be immense, and that she will be, as it were, newly built and consecrated to her spouse, Jesus Christ.

2. And it was said to me: Arise. These words also signify that the temple of the Lord will be immensely enlarged, and that the house of God will be built in the four parts of the world. Arise - that is: leave thy place, thy country, and go into all the corners of the world, so that thou mayest be able to measure this temple.

Saint John is ordered to use this manner of speaking and writing for the consolation of the Church, as is also related in Genesis 13:14-17: "The Lord said to Abraham: Lift up thy eyes, and look from the place wherein thou now art, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. All the land which thou seest, I will give to thee, and to thy seed for ever. I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: if any man be able to number the dust of the earth, he shall be able to number thy seed also. Arise, and walk through the land in the length and in the breadth thereof: for I will give it to thee." It is known that this posterity of Abraham had to extend according to faith; and this posterity is indeed innumerable, since it includes all the children of faith from the time of Abraham until the last day of the world.

3. Measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that adore therein. By the temple which Saint John is ordered to measure here is understood the immense extent of the new

Church which will be joined to the Latin Church by the conversion of nations in America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. We have already seen so happy a beginning of this in the fifth age, in China, in the Indies, in Japan, and in other countries still.

The altar signifies metaphorically the honour and exaltation of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which will be celebrated over the whole surface of the earth. Likewise, the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified by men upon the altar with great faith. And them that adore therein. These words first indicate the priests. The Latin text says in eo - "at the altar." For priests will be spread over the whole earth in great multitude; and by the continual sacrifice they will adore God the Father and His Son Jesus, in union with the Holy Spirit.

And them that adore. These words also signify the Christians who will have a very great zeal to assist at this august sacrifice and to frequent the holy table. Jesus Christ speaks of this sixth age of the Church in Saint Matthew 24:14, and He indicates it as a sign which will precede the last desolation and the day of His second coming: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come."

Likewise in Saint John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Likewise again in Isaiah 2:2: "And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." And finally, in the prophet Micah 4:1 and following.

§ 3. On the Land Reserved to the Gentiles and to Antichrist, and Which Will Never Form Part of the Church of Christ. Chapter 11, Verses 2-3

I. VERSE 2. But the court which is without the temple, leave out, and measure it not, because it is given unto the Gentiles. In these words, Jesus Christ instructs His Church, through Saint John, concerning the astonishing secret and the permission of God touching the reign of Muhammad and of Antichrist, of whom the former was the precursor and the type. For it is from the mixture of these two races, the Jews and the Gentiles, that the son of perdition, Antichrist, will be born and will come; and he will reign over them.

Thus the empire of the Turks will not be entirely destroyed; rather, there will remain from it a kingdom of a certain extent, formed from these races. Jesus Christ speaks expressly of this kingdom in Saint Matthew 24:15: "When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation in the holy place," etc. And in Saint Mark 13:14: "And when you shall see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not," etc.

It is therefore so that all the prophecies may be fulfilled that God, in His secret counsels, will permit these Gentiles to occupy Palestine, the Holy Land, and the other kingdoms which Juda and Israel formerly inhabited; and they will possess them until all prevarication is accomplished. We have palpable proof of this mystery of His will in the fact that He does not permit this generation, formed from Turks and Jews, to disappear entirely and perish until it has produced the son of iniquity.

How many emperors, kings, and princes have made every effort to retake the Holy Land, always without success - or at least without obtaining any other results than premature victories, of which they soon lost all the fruits! What a horrible thing is this permanent discord among Christian princes over this great and endless question! It is thus that the annihilation of the power and reign of the Turks has always been hindered by our pride and wickedness, until we Christians ourselves fill up the measure of our sins, and until the Lord

finally becomes weary of His Church, by permitting the son of perdition to exalt his pride.

We find in the Old Testament an example of this weariness of the Lord toward the house of Israel, which was the figure of Christianity in the New. 4 Kings 10:32: "In those days the Lord began to be weary of Israel," etc. For the Turks are and will be, with regard to the Latin Church, what Assur was with regard to the synagogue of the Jews; and the latter was the figure of the former. Therefore, however great the extent of the Latin Church must be in the sixth age, nevertheless Palestine, the Holy Land, and other kingdoms of the East will never belong to the sheepfold of Jesus Christ.

For it is in these lands reserved to the Gentiles that the kingdom of the son of perdition will be born and will arise. All the Jews will recognise him as their king; and they will gather together from the East, from the West, from the North, from the South, and from the desert mountains, in order to unite themselves to him. It is of this circumstance that Jesus Christ speaks when He says in John 5:43: "I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."

Jesus Christ also speaks of the Holy Land, and of the desolation of the Jews and of the Gentiles, in Saint Matthew 23:39: "For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth, till you say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus Christ again says expressly of Jerusalem, Luke 21:24: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the nations be fulfilled."

Whence the text continues: But leave out the court which is without the temple. By the court one understands Palestine, or the Holy Land and Jerusalem, as well as the synagogue of the Jews; and by the temple, one understands the Church of the nations of Christ. For: 1. It is in the courts of kings' palaces that all subjects must wait until they are admitted to the audience of the sovereign. 2. Those who are in these courts see only the outward construction of the palaces; but they cannot penetrate their secrets, nor see the beauties within, before they have been introduced.

3. The court is always, in comparison with the palace, the part that is less spacious and less adorned. 4. It is in the courts that the servants of the king await his orders, as though trembling, in order to serve their master according to his will, etc. Now such was, such still is, and such will perfectly be Palestine, or the Holy Land and the synagogue of the Jews, with regard to the Church of Jesus Christ.

For: 1. In the Old Testament, all the Jews waited in the court of the temple of God, which was limbo; and no one could be admitted into the heavenly palace, into the presence of the Lord God Almighty, until the fulfilment of the great mystery: "The Word was made flesh," and until Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, in order to lead them into His royal and eternal palace. 2. In the Old Testament, the Jews were as though wrapped in a cloud; and they could see the mysteries of God only from afar, as in a mirror and under obscure images.

But we Christians, having been introduced by Jesus Christ Himself into His royal palace, which is the Church, know, see, and hear these mysteries distinctly by the word of life, as one sees in the First Epistle of Saint John 1:1. Moreover, as much as a court is imperfect, narrow, and roughly built in comparison with the royal palace whose entrance it forms, so much was the synagogue of the Jews imperfect, narrow, and roughly built in comparison with the Church of Christ, into which all the nations of the earth were and will be admitted.

3. The synagogue and her children were received only under the title of servants, while the Church our mother has put aside all servile fear in exchange for love; and her children are no longer servants, but citizens of the holy city, and even the sons of God. Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 4; and 1 John 3. Thus Jerusalem and the country subject to it, as well as the

synagogue of the Jews, were only the courts of the temple of the Catholic Church.

This is why it is said to Saint John: But leave out the court which is without the temple. The Latin text says: ejice foras - "cast it outside." This is a manner of speaking by which: a) kings and princes are accustomed to confirm and sanction decrees which they have issued ab irato, or concerning a matter of high importance, when they wish them to be irrevocable; b) one casts away things that are useless, spoiled, and with which one no longer knows what to do.

Now it is in this way that Jesus Christ orders Saint John again to reject Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and the whole Jewish nation, which had already been rejected by a just judgment of God. By this, therefore, God confirms His sentence of reprobation, by virtue of which the Jewish nation was dispersed throughout the whole earth, and Jerusalem and all Palestine were delivered into the power of the nations, without being able ever to belong to the Church of God.

Although ancient Jerusalem was destroyed from top to bottom, it was rebuilt in the place where Jesus Christ was crucified, and the Christian religion was implanted there; but it could not maintain itself there because of the frequent invasions of the Saracens. Finally, Chosroes, having massacred or led into captivity all the Christians who lived in that city, took possession of it; and his successors have continued to be its masters until this day, except for an interval of a few years during which Godfrey and his brother were kings there.

All the expeditions that were afterward made to retake the Holy Land, and that are known under the name of crusades, however great or powerful they were, came to nothing, and were rendered useless by the wars, discords, and pride of Christians. This is why it is said to Saint John: But the court which is without the temple, leave out, and measure it not, because it is given unto the Gentiles.

This again is a manner of speaking used by a military leader or prince who, despairing of being able to keep a city under his dominion, either because of the proximity and power of his enemies, or because its inhabitants are hostile to him, orders that this city should not be counted among those of his kingdom, but should be abandoned to the mercy of foreigners. Now it is in this way that Saint John, in the marking out of the limits of the Church of Christ - limits which will be extremely extended in the sixth age - is charged with expressly informing Christendom that Jerusalem and Judea must not be included within these limits.

He immediately gives the following reason: Because it, that is, this court, has been given unto the Gentiles. That is, apart from the few years during which Jerusalem belonged to the Christians under Godfrey and his brother - of which it is not worth making mention - this country will continue to be abandoned to the nations until the prevarication is consummated.

And they shall tread the holy city under foot forty-two months. These words indicate the time during which these nations will possess this country under the empire and sect of Muhammad and of the Turks, of whom we shall speak below. The whole time of their reign will therefore be forty-two months, which make one thousand two hundred seventy-seven and a half years. But this reign will not always exist with the same power; for toward the end, it will be reduced to a small kingdom, as we have said above. Moreover, to know how many years it has already existed, one must return to its origin, of which we shall speak elsewhere.

And they shall tread the holy city under foot, etc. By the holy city one understands the present city of Jerusalem. It is called holy because of the holiness of the place where it was built, and because Jesus Christ was crucified there. By the holy city, the prophet understands all Palestine, taking the part for the whole. The nations will tread it under foot - that is, they will dominate there. For what one treads under one's feet is beneath oneself; one dominates it, and one treats it according to one's good pleasure. These words therefore signify the

empire of the nations over the holy city.

Now why does Saint John name the nations and not their leader? It is because he cites the body for the head, since these nations will always profess the sect of Muhammad, who was also the founder of his empire. For these nations did not always exist under that same empire of Muhammad by immediate succession, since this reign underwent changes and passed into other hands; but the sect always remained, as we shall see below.

Now, since here the prophet does not describe the head of this impious sect himself, who was Muhammad, type and precursor of Antichrist, but rather describes the time during which the empire he founded will last, it is with reason that he names rather the nations that will persevere constantly in his sect, until the forty-two and a half months of its duration are fulfilled.

One therefore sees, from what has just been said, why the armies of the crusaders - sometimes so numerous and so strong - and why so many warlike expeditions undertaken at various times, with a holy purpose, against the Saracens and against the Turks, had such a vain result. For, setting aside some of the major causes that made them fail - such as the jealousy of the Greeks, the sins and scandals of the crusaders, and other various obstacles and calamities - there remains for us the reason for this fact: the divine will, which wished the prophecies concerning the reigns, the times, and the prevarications to be fulfilled.

This does not prevent those holy warriors who, being in the peace of the Lord, fell under the enemy's sword, and in general all those who took part in these glorious expeditions, from being rewarded for their generous sacrifices and their pious labours. For one must not imagine that these enterprises came from any source other than the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with the purpose of procuring for Christian soldiers a glorious and meritorious death by shedding their blood for the Name of Jesus; and also with the purpose of breaking the forces of the enemy, keeping him in fear, and preventing him from passing beyond his limits in order to exterminate Christians.

CHAPTER 11

The Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:3–19

Section II: On Chapter 11 - Of the Persecution of Antichrist, and of the Seventh and Last Trumpet

§ 1. On the Time of the Persecution of Antichrist. Chapter 11, Verses 3-13

I. VERSE 3. And I will give my spirit to my two witnesses; and clothed in sackcloth, they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days. In this text, Saint John describes the reign - or rather the tyranny - of Antichrist, and the final desolation proceeding from the empire of Muhammad and ending in that of Antichrist; that is, the figure becomes reality, and the reign of the precursor becomes the consummator of all iniquity.

This new empire will be born, formed, and will draw its power from the first. Because of this relation and affinity between these two empires, God also establishes a relation and affinity of time between them, so that the second reign will last as many days as the first lasted years. For this reason Saint John expresses, with truth, the duration of both these reigns by forty-two months, which, if reduced to prophetic days, make a period of one thousand two hundred seventy-seven and a half years, which will be the duration of the reign of Muhammad.

But if these forty-two months are counted in their natural sense - which is the true sense and the one canonically recognised in the second case - it follows that the time of the persecution of Antichrist will be one thousand two hundred seventy-seven and a half days. It is on that final day that Antichrist, wishing to rise up to heaven, will be cast down into hell, as we shall see later.

His persecution will be the most dangerous and the greatest that has ever taken place, as Jesus Christ clearly foretells in Saint Matthew 24:21: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be." Nevertheless, divine goodness will send several robust athletes of the faith of Christ, among whom Enoch and Elijah will especially be distinguished. They will preach and work great wonders in the Name of Jesus against the impostures and false miracles of Antichrist; and when they have finished their mission and given their testimony, he will put them to death.

Hence the text continues: And I will give my spirit to my two witnesses. These two witnesses will be Enoch and Elijah. The first lived under the natural law, and the second under the Law of Moses. They will return at the end of the world and will bear witness to Jesus Christ of Nazareth by astonishing miracles and by their powerful preaching against Antichrist and his followers.

They will persuade the nations, and even the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Messiah, the Son of the living God, who has already come into this world as Redeemer; that He was truly crucified at Jerusalem by the chief priests; that He died for the salvation of the

whole universe; that on the third day He rose again from the dead; that He ascended into heaven; and that He sits at the right hand of God, from whence He will come on the last day to judge the living and the dead.

From this one sees that, just as Saint John the Baptist was the precursor of Christ at His first coming, so Enoch and Elijah will be the precursors at His second appearing. And just as the Apostles bore witness to Him to the ends of the earth that He is the Christ, Acts 1:8, so Enoch and Elijah will do in the last days of the world.

Their testimony, therefore, will be expressed by their mouth, and it will be confirmed by their wonders: that Jesus is the Christ. This is what the son of perdition will formally deny. 1 John 2:22: "Who is a liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is Antichrist, who denieth the Father and the Son." And again, 1 John 4:1-3.

And I will give, etc. This verb is placed here in the future active, whereas above, in the Latin, it is placed in the past passive, to signify that God only permits evils, and that He is the remunerator and distributor of goods. And just as in all times He granted to the Church and to His people consolations and helps proportioned to the needs and tribulations they had to endure, so He will continue to do, especially in the last and most dangerous persecution. He will therefore give to these two witnesses, chosen for this circumstance, great wisdom and powerful virtue against Antichrist, against the false prophets, and against the false Christians.

And clothed in sackcloth, they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days. By these words, Saint John designates the time, the office, and the clothing of these two witnesses of Christ, the Son of God. The time of their preaching will therefore be a thousand two hundred sixty days, taken from the forty-two months of the tyranny of Antichrist and his followers.

The office of these saints will be preaching: they shall prophesy - that is, they will preach to the nations and to the Jews the end of the world, the Last Judgment, penance; and finally, they will preach that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who will come to judge the living and the dead. Such is their destination and the purpose for which they are reserved: the conversion and penance of the nations and of the Jews.

Enoch is spoken of in Ecclesiasticus 44:16: "Enoch pleased God, and was translated into paradise, that he may give repentance to the nations." And Elijah is spoken of in the same book, Ecclesiasticus 48:9-10: "Thou who wast taken up in a whirlwind of fire, in a chariot of fiery horses; who art registered in the judgments of times, to appease the wrath of the Lord, to reconcile the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob."

VERSE 4. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth. These words must be taken both in a passive and in an active sense. Passively, because they will be anointed with the oil of holiness, charity, and heavenly wisdom. Actively, because they will pour the oil of salvation upon the wounds of the nations and the Jews; because they will soften their hearts, enlighten them in the truth and faith of Jesus Christ, and thus bring an end to the dispersion of Israel.

This is why Jesus Christ says in Saint Matthew 17:11: "Elijah indeed shall come, and restore all things." And in Saint Mark 9:12: "Elijah, when he shall come first, shall restore all things." Hence the text adds that these two olive trees and these two candlesticks stand before the Lord - that is, they are reserved alive, by the will of God, for the penance and conversion of the nations and of the Jews. For those among the nations and Jews who will exist upon the earth in the last days will adhere to the doctrine of Antichrist.

Saint John, in representing these two prophets under the figure of two candlesticks, here takes the container for the contained. The garment with which the two saints will be clothed

when preaching throughout the whole earth will be the same as that which Saint John the Baptist wore when he came out of the desert to preach penance: that is, sackcloth and haircloth, which are the only garments suitable for fulfilling this office worthily. This ought to make preachers and pastors of souls blush with shame, who, after the example of worldlings, dare to adorn themselves and appear in courts and worldly society with luxurious clothing and all the refinements of effeminate dress.

II. VERSE 5. And if any man will hurt them, fire shall come out of their mouths, etc. These words and the following express the virtue and power of the great miracles and wonders which it will be given to these two saints to work in those last days, in order to confound the imposture and power of Antichrist and of the false prophets. For what was done in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and in the days of Ahab and Jezebel by the hand of Elijah, will be renewed in the last days by the power of these two prophets.

Their first and special virtue will be to destroy by fire the enemies whom Antichrist and his followers will send against them to kill them; and this wonder will be repeated frequently and publicly during the course of their mission. This is why it is said: If any man will hurt them - that is, kill them and destroy them - fire shall come out of their mouths. Not really and substantially, but by their commanding voice. For by the word of God they will command the elements, and lightning will descend from heaven and devour their enemies.

We read, in fact, in Scripture, that this wonder was really worked at the word of Elijah. 4 Kings 1:9: "The king sent to him a captain of fifty, and the fifty men that were under him; and he went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said: Man of God, the king hath commanded that thou come down. And Elijah answering said: If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee, and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and the fifty that were with him." Ochozias sent another captain of fifty, who said to Elijah: "Man of God, thus saith the king: Make haste and come down." Elijah answered: "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty." And immediately fire came down from heaven and consumed that man and his fifty soldiers.

Ochozias sent a third captain and his fifty soldiers with him, etc. Moreover, the virtue of the power of these two prophets will be general; that is, they will cause every kind of evil to fall back upon the heads of those very persons who dare to attack them. Their enemies will fall into the very pit which they have dug to lay snares for them, of whatever kind they may be: death or other evils. For the text adds: And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. It is thus that Elijah destroyed all the prophets of Baal at the torrent of Cison, when Jezebel was seeking to put him and his followers to death. 3 Kings 18.

The third virtue of their power will be manifested in heaven, for: VERSE 6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. This happened in the days of Ahab, king of Israel, by the hand of the prophet Elijah, because of the impiety and idolatry to which this king and his people gave themselves. 3 Kings 17. For during three years there was neither dew nor rain upon that land, and heaven was shut.

The fourth virtue of the power of these saints will be manifested upon the waters, which they will change into blood. This is what Moses and Aaron did when they struck the waters with their rod. Exodus 7:20. This is why the text says: And they have power over waters to turn them into blood.

The fifth virtue they will manifest upon the earth, by striking it and its inhabitants with plagues, according to the text: And to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. This is what Moses did in Exodus 8, 9, and 10, when he sent upon the land of Egypt frogs, gnats, flies, locusts, hail, lightning, pestilence upon animals, ulcers upon men, darkness,

death upon the firstborn, and finally the despoiling of gold and silver.

With such plagues, and with many others still, these two prophets will strike the earth toward the end of times, in the presence of the son of perdition and before the nations and the people of Israel, as Moses and Aaron did. And just as Pharaoh succeeded, by his enchantments, in imitating some of these wonders, though imperfectly, and resisted those two men of God and His people, so, in the last days, Antichrist will enjoy, by God's permission, a still greater power to imitate Enoch and Elijah - but not to equal them in the great wonders which they will work by the power of God in heaven, on earth, upon the waters, upon the fruits, upon the animals, and finally upon the impious, whom they will strike with plagues so cruel that they will die of pain. The son of perdition, in his turn, will do similar things, but he will not be able to do all of them, nor as perfectly. He will do them in a spirit of iniquity and falsehood, and by the power of the demon by whom he will be possessed and whom he will adore, etc.

VERSE 7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. In these words and those that follow, Saint John describes the war, the death, and the bodily victory in which God will grant Antichrist triumph over these two prophets, after their war and spiritual victory against him. Antichrist is here called the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss.

And when they shall have finished their testimony - that is, when the time of one thousand two hundred sixty days has passed, during which they will preach that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Messiah - the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them. By the beast, Saint John therefore designates Antichrist, or the son of perdition, who will appear in the world toward the end of times.

1. He is called the beast because of his abominable life, which he will pass in lust and the concupiscence of women. 2. Because of his unparalleled cruelty, with which, like the fierce leopard, he will rage against Christians. 3. A wild beast devours and tears everything it encounters; and so Antichrist will devour and mutilate all holy and sacred things. He will abolish the continual sacrifice, he will tread under foot the Holy of Holies, he will not fear the God of his fathers, and he will not concern himself with any god. Daniel 11:37. 4. As the final destiny of the beast is to be born and live only to be killed or to perish, so Antichrist will be born, appointed, and chosen to do nothing but evil, and to run to his perdition. It is for this reason that he is called the son of perdition.

The beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 1. It is said that the beast will ascend from the abyss because Antichrist will come to the empire through the most secret and hidden frauds, and by the most criminal artifices; and it is by the help of the power of darkness that he will enter into the kingdom and exalt himself above all things. It is also because he will possess the treasures of gold, silver, and the most precious stones hidden in the abysses of the earth and of the sea; and these treasures will be revealed and delivered to him by the demon Moazim, whom he will adore. Daniel 11.

Finally, the word abyss also signifies an immense quantity of water whose depth is unknown; and the waters, according to Apocalypse 12, "are peoples, nations, and tongues." Now the quantity of these waters which will adhere to the doctrine of Antichrist and will recognise him will be almost infinite. It is from this abyss that the son of perdition will rise; and over its immense surface, which will be as great as the world, his empire will extend.

2. The beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. One must notice here that the verb ascendeth is placed in the present, whereas the verbs make, overcome, and kill are in the future. This teaches us that it

will not be permitted to Antichrist to rage against the two prophets from the very moment of his elevation to the throne, but only after they have rendered and completed their testimony of Jesus Christ, according to Saint John's own expression: When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

3. The war that Antichrist will make against these two saints will be of two different kinds: war in miracles, and war in torments. For the beast will seek to rival these holy prophets by astonishing but false prodigies, which he will succeed in working by diabolical artifices. And because he will not succeed in equalling fully and perfectly their virtue and power, which they will hold from God Himself, the beast will avenge his defeat and supply for it by torments and by tyrannical acts against the temporal life of these prophets.

By God's permission, he will overcome them and kill them. Then he will cast away their bodies and expose them in the public squares of Jerusalem before the eyes of the nations and of the Jews. He will take care to have their death published, so that all men, as far as possible, may see and believe that he is above every virtue and every power.

VERSE 8. And their bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. This great city is modern Jerusalem. It is called the great city because of its numerous population and because of the immense celebrity which it will especially have then. It will be great by its riches, by its treasures, by the peoples, nations, and men of various tongues who will inhabit it and flow into it from all sides; for in that time Jerusalem will become very powerful and very celebrated.

It is in the streets of this city that the bodies of the two prophets, Enoch and Elijah, will truly lie, along with those of several other holy martyrs who will have been constant, firm, and unshaken in the confession of the holy Name of Jesus, and who will have resisted the son of perdition unto death. Among them will be found especially the priests and doctors of the Church of whom Daniel speaks in Daniel 11:33: "And the learned among the people shall teach many: and they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, and by spoil for many days."

This persecution will not take place only in Jerusalem, but will rage in a horrible and frightful manner over the whole surface of the earth, and will greatly surpass all the preceding persecutions, as Jesus Christ announces in Saint Matthew 24:21: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be."

This city is called spiritually - that is, allegorically - Sodom, because of the resemblance which Jerusalem will then have with Sodom, by the consummated vices of every kind which will be committed there, as well as throughout the whole earth. For in that time the fear of God will have disappeared, and men will give themselves over to sin in complete security; and such as the leader is, such will the people be. The impious of those last times will reproduce the summary and the height of all the scenes of impiety which the world has produced since its origin.

Moreover, this city is called Egypt because Jerusalem and its king will do against Jesus Christ, in the days of Enoch and Elijah, what Egypt and its king Pharaoh did against God in the days of Moses and Aaron. And just as then there was a struggle of miracle against miracle, prodigy against prodigy, so it will happen at the end of times. Again, just as Pharaoh made every effort to prevent the children of Israel from entering the Promised Land, so Antichrist will employ all his power to prevent Christians from entering the dwelling of the promise, which is eternal life. All these words are said by allegory, for the scenes of the Old Testament were the figure of the secrets and mysteries of the New.

Finally, so that it may be clearly shown that this city will be no other than Jerusalem, the text adds: Where also their Lord was crucified. These words apply literally to the death of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all things. And just as at the death of Christ the Jews and the Gentiles rejoiced, and the people dared to blaspheme, saying, Matthew 27:40: "Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also, at the death of Enoch and Elijah, the impious will rejoice and clap their hands in applause over their death and over the death of the just; and they will glorify the son of perdition, their false messiah.

They will exalt him above all things and will consider him as God. His power will appear to them above every power, because he will have conquered and killed these two prophets who before had been so powerful in word and deed. For this reason they will judge them as magicians and false prophets, will turn them into mockery, will cover their bodies with spittle, and will treat them with ignominy.

VERSE 9. And they of the tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations shall see their bodies lying three days and a half. The day is here taken for a week, which is the time appointed for man's labours, as though the week formed only one day. Thus the bodies of the two prophets will remain exposed to the mockery of the impious, who will make a plaything of them, for three and a half weeks; and Antichrist will enjoy, throughout all this time, the fruits of his victory and triumph amid the most horrible scenes.

It will not be permitted to bury these bodies, because they must serve as witnesses to the assembled nations of the greatness, power, and even divinity of the false messiah who will have conquered and killed them. This is why the text adds: And they shall not suffer their bodies to be laid in sepulchres. Then the son of perdition will see himself so glorified by this victory, and he will be so intoxicated by it, that, in the heat of his enthusiasm, he will go and place himself upon the summit of the Mount of Olives, in order to be publicly adored there as though he were God.

And in order better to manifest the glory of his divinity, he will make preparations to celebrate his ascension into heaven. It is to this circumstance that the words of the prophet Daniel refer, Daniel 11:45: "He shall pitch his tabernacle in Apadno, between the seas, upon a glorious and holy mountain; and he shall come even to the top thereof, and none shall help him."

VERSE 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them: and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another. These words show the intoxication of joy, carried even to frenzy, which the impious will manifest during those twenty-four days, or three and a half weeks, that their triumph will last.

In their blindness they will exalt and glorify Antichrist. And since he will have taken care to have his victory over these two so celebrated prophets published, the mass of men covering the surface of the globe will be agitated like the waves of the sea; and tribes, nations, and men of various tongues will flow in those days to Jerusalem to see these so renowned corpses, and to contemplate their deified king in all the splendour of his majesty.

Then men will dance for joy over the death of the two prophets and of the other just ones who will have been martyred for the holy Name of Jesus, as Herodias danced and rejoiced over the beheading of Saint John the Baptist. They will erect throughout the earth trophies and magnificent statues to Antichrist; they will burn incense upon his altars and will adore him as their god and their messiah. All men who believe in him will be invited to feasts, banquets, dances, weddings, and pleasures of every kind.

They will seek to satisfy all the desires of the flesh, because they will think they have arrived at the fullness of rest, now that their peace has no longer been troubled by the two preachers of penance. They will be so stupefied by the happiness and bacchanals of those twenty-four days of worldly madness that they will not suspect at all the last and horrible evils which will surprise them like a thief.

And they shall send gifts one to another, from village to village, from city to city, and from country to country. For after the death of the two prophets, power will be given to the beast over all men powerful in works and words; and these will be put to death in every region of the earth, or will be forced to flee into the mountains and desert places, to hide in the dens of rocks and in dark caves. For no one will dare to declare himself a Christian publicly. On their side, the impious will be in joy, feasts, and pleasures, and their triumph will be perfect upon the earth.

The God of heaven will no longer give signs either in heaven, or on earth, or in the waters after these two prophets, who previously taught true doctrine to many, maintaining them in the faith by the greatest prodigies. So much so that in those last days, truly all men will adore the beast; and even Christians, except the elect, seeing at the same time the ignominious death of their prophets, the peace of the wicked, the victory of Antichrist, and the silence and apparent abandonment of God, will take scandal and will defect.

They too will burn their incense before the altar of the beast; and after having accepted his character on the hand or on the forehead, as we shall explain later, they will adore his image. Saint John now indicates to us the cause of this mad joy: Because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth. That is, by their prodigies and by their great miracles, which they will work in heaven, on earth, and in the waters, to bear witness to Jesus that He is the Christ; and by striking the earth and its inhabitants with every kind of plague and temporal scourge, to compel them to have recourse to penance and to save their souls.

Now these impious ones, obstinate in their sins, will be supremely thwarted by this; and they will rejoice to be finally delivered from their physical evils, because these two prophets tormented those who dwelt upon the earth.

VERSE 11. But after three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them. These words and the following suddenly show us the change of the right hand of the Almighty, who does not permit the triumph of the impious over the just to last long. But after three days and a half - that is, after these twenty-four days - the spirit of life from God entered into them. By His infinite power, God will raise these two prophets from the dead.

And they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. Indeed, the sudden and unexpected change of this imposing scene will be terrible for the impious. This solemn transformation of the state of men upon the earth gives us an idea of the one we shall see in the other life. In the eyes of men, the impious triumphs and the just man is oppressed; but before God, the groanings of the just will be changed into glory and eternal consolation, while the passing and ephemeral triumph of the wicked will be followed by torments immense in their rigour and endless in their duration.

Wisdom 5:1: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them and taken away their labours. These seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation." "They shall say within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."

III. VERSE 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up hither. And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. One must take literally all the words contained in this text; and their meaning is natural and without figure. For it will truly happen that God, wishing to give a public and solemn testimony to the truth of the preaching of these two prophets raised from the dead, will cause them to ascend into heaven in body and soul, in the presence of all peoples, of all tribes, and of all tongues who will have come from all the ends of the earth, and will have rushed like waves of population toward the king of Jerusalem.

Then Antichrist will feel himself troubled with icy fear. He will tremble with rage; and in the excess of his pride and infernal presumption, wishing to give a final proof of his false divinity, and wishing also to hold the peoples in the abyss of error by the help of the power of demons, he will rise from the Mount of Olives into the air with great majesty, and will strive to reach Enoch and Elijah in order to cast them down to the earth.

But behold: at that solemn moment, the power of the Almighty strikes him and casts him down into the greatest ignominy and confusion. A horrible earthquake overturns the whole region. A great part of Jerusalem falls into ruin. The false prophets and most of their followers are killed. And the son of perdition, falling into the gulfs of the opened earth, is cast alive into hell.

Then the remnants of the Jews and of the nations, seeing with their own eyes the power of God and the deception of their king, the false messiah, will be converted to the Lord and to His Christ. Seized with horrible fear, they will strike their breasts and pronounce these words which Jesus Christ predicted of them: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

VERSE 13. And at that hour there was a great earthquake: and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were slain in the earthquake seven thousand men: and the rest were cast into fear, and gave glory to God.

§ 2. On the Last Trumpet and the Last Woe. Chapter 11, Verses 14-19

I. After the tribulation of those great days and the ruin of Antichrist, there will no longer be years, but only days, still granted to the human race for doing penance. And it is in those last days that the great signs and horrible portents will take place which will precede the dissolution of heaven and earth, and the great day of judgment. These signs and portents will be manifested in the four elements: in the sun, the moon, the stars, in the sea, and upon the hills.

This is what we read in Saint Matthew 24:29-31: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them."

We read likewise in Saint Luke 21:25-26: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved." Thus, after the fall of Antichrist, there will no longer be months or years, but only a few days filled with

every misery, every calamity, and horrible portents. For then the earthly globe itself will fight against the foolish men who will be living especially in those times.

VERSE 14. The second woe is past; and behold the third woe will come quickly. This third and last woe, the most horrible of all, as well as the seventh and last trumpet, refers to the consummation of the ages, to the dissolution of the world, and to the universal judgment. Moreover, this seventh angel who will sound the trumpet will not be, like the preceding ones, an evil angel, but a good one.

It will even be the Archangel Saint Michael, who, like a military commander, after having ended the battle and won a definitive and eternal victory, will call his own to the universal judgment and to the resurrection of the dead, so that the works and secret thoughts of men may be manifested in the full light of day. Then the soldiers of Christ who have fought bravely will receive their reward and their crown. On the other hand, the enemies of God and the soldiers of Lucifer will be cast into the torments of hell.

Saint Paul speaks of the trumpet of this angel in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15, and he also calls it the last trumpet. He says further, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16: "For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first." We see also in Saint Matthew 24:31: "He shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds."

Thus, at the sound of the trumpet of this seventh angel, the present age will end with its trumpets, wars, sins, and calamities. The system of this world will be dissolved. A new heaven and a new earth will be established. God will judge the age by the fire which tests gold, and the mystery of the kingdom of God will be consummated, as He declared it through the prophets His servants from the beginning of the world.

II. VERSE 15. And the seventh angel sounded the trumpet; and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and his Christ's, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Amen. These words and the following describe the great joy which the Church triumphant will experience after the victory won over Antichrist and the world, because at last the great day of the Lord will have arrived: the day on which vengeance will be taken upon the enemies of the Cross of Christ, and on which the just will be rewarded.

And there were great voices in heaven, saying, etc. That is, in the Church triumphant there will be great acclamations made to the Lord God and to His Christ. These voices from heaven will be those of the saints: that is, their desires, prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, which all the choirs of holy martyrs, virgins, angels, and all the saints will make heard with acclamation after this victory won over Antichrist and after the extermination of all his adherents upon the earth.

And these saints will say: The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of Our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen. This acclamation perfectly suits the King of kings, who has conquered all others and who alone reigns as absolute sovereign, without any opposition whatever, to whom all subjects are perfectly submitted, and whose reign is eternal. For Satan will no longer be able to make war against Him, nor against His friends who will serve Him in glory, while His enemies will be subject to Him in hell without ever being able to leave it.

This reign is spoken of in the Psalms of David, Psalm 109:1: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool." And in Daniel 2:44: "In the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people; and it shall break in

pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever." It is said also in Saint Luke 1:33: "Of His kingdom there shall be no end."

VERSE 16. And the four and twenty ancients, who sit on their seats in the sight of God, fell on their faces and adored God, saying, etc. By the twenty-four ancients, Saint John designates the universality of the judges. He represents them already seated upon their thrones, to make us understand that the universal judgment is so near that the judges have already taken their places to judge all men.

These twenty-four ancients fell upon their faces, and they adored God, saying, etc. These acts testify to the most perfect submission and to the worship of adoration which the saints render to the Lord God in heaven, in peace, love, and truth. They are perfectly submitted to Him, recognising, praising, glorifying, and adoring Him alone, for His greater glory, for ever and ever.

VERSE 17. We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art, and who wast, and who art to come. These words are an act of the most just thanksgiving, by which the saints attribute to Almighty God, the first principle and eternal source of every good, all the glory and happiness which they enjoy in heaven. For indeed, everything that we are, and everything that we shall become, we must render glory for it to God the Father, because it is from Him, first, that we hold everything we can possess.

VERSE 18. Because thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned; and the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged; and that thou shouldst render reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, little and great, and shouldst destroy them who have corrupted the earth. The Apostle here specifies the causes of this brilliant and solemn joy of the saints.

The first cause is this: Because thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned. This is a human manner of speaking, which Scripture also uses to express that God is immutable, and that He possesses in Himself all that He manifests outwardly. It is in this sense that He has received and exercised His great power against the impious, and that He has finally subdued and conquered all His enemies, in order to reign alone throughout all eternity.

It is in the same manner that one says of a prince or warrior: "The king gave him the sword to fight his enemies," although he already carried that sword beforehand. It is again in this same sense that the Psalmist says, Psalm 92: "The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded himself."

God has undoubtedly worked many wonders during the course of time; but it is especially for the consummation of the age that He reserves His great blows, when He will strike Antichrist with all his followers, when He will manifest signs and work astonishing prodigies, when He will shake heaven and earth, and when He will come on the last day with great power and great majesty to judge all men, rendering to each one what is due, without respect of persons.

It is with reason that the Church triumphant will then manifest her joy by loud acclamations, because the Lord God Almighty will finally have armed Himself with His great power to exterminate the impious and all the kings who have tyrannised the just, and to grant the good an eternal reward in His kingdom.

The second cause of these acclamations is indicated in these words: The nations were angry. And why? Because they will no longer be able to dominate, oppress, or afflict the just; nor despoil the widow and the orphan; nor despise the poor; nor satisfy their evil desires.

For according to the Psalmist, Psalm 58:14-17: "They shall return at evening, and shall suffer hunger like dogs: and shall go round about the city. They shall be scattered abroad to eat; and shall murmur if they be not filled. But I will sing thy strength: and will extol thy mercy in the morning. For thou art become my support, and my refuge in the day of my trouble." In this world, it is the widows, orphans, poor, oppressed, miserable, persecuted, and saints of God who run around the cities, imploring - too often without success - the mercy of those who possess the substance of the earth.

But in the other life, circumstances will have greatly changed, when Jesus Christ, the King of kings, will reign alone for eternity in justice, truth, and holiness; and when the reign of wicked princes, tyrants, and merciless rich men will have passed away and been changed into eternal torments. It is then that such nations will be angry against the eternal kingdom of Almighty God. Psalm 98:1: "The Lord hath reigned; let the people be angry: he that sitteth on the cherubim; let the earth be moved."

But the anger of these nations will be vain, and their torments will be eternal. A worm will gnaw them without ceasing. They will grow old and dry up in their endless pains; and the effects of their anger against the Lord will be much more powerless than a grain of sand from the sea is against the firmament. This is why it is said in Psalm 111:10: "The wicked shall see, and shall be angry: he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away; the desire of the wicked shall perish." For they will be like starving dogs, with no hope of ever being freed from their eternal chains, because they themselves were without pity and without mercy upon the earth.

The third cause of their rage will be this: And the time of thy wrath is come. That is, the day of universal vengeance, the day of darkness and of the great tempest which will strike down the wicked, has arrived. And they will be angry in vain. For if the wrath of God is just and all-powerful throughout all eternity, their anger will have less effect than the efforts of an ant attempting to overturn the universe.

Psalm 2:4-6: "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them. Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage. But I am appointed king by him over Sion, his holy mountain, preaching his commandment." David also prophesied of this wrath of the impious in Psalm 20:10: "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire, in the time of thy anger: the Lord shall trouble them in his wrath, and fire shall devour them." Finally, we leave to the reader the care of reading in Scripture the numerous passages that concern the wrath of the Lord on the last day. It is this same wrath that the Church sings in the Dies irae, dies illa, etc.

The fourth cause is found in these words: And the time of the dead, that they should be judged. The saints will rejoice at this wrath and at this just vengeance of God, and they await it. It is by this that the Lord consoles His own even in this life amid their tribulations, saying in Romans 12:19: "Revenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath. For it is written: Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

Deuteronomy 32:22-35: "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell, and shall devour the earth with her increase, and shall burn the foundations of the mountains. I will heap evils upon them, and will spend my arrows among them. They shall be consumed with famine, and birds shall devour them with a most bitter bite. I will send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of creatures that trail upon the ground and of serpents. Without, the sword shall lay them waste, and terror within," etc.

"But because of the wrath of the enemies I delayed, lest their enemies should be proud and should say: Our mighty hand, and not the Lord, hath done all these things. They are a nation without counsel and without prudence. O that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end! Vengeance is mine, and I will repay them in due time, that

their foot may slide. The day of destruction is near, and the times make haste to come." Thus, on the day of judgment, God will execute His vengeance. The saints will rejoice in it, and they desire it beforehand.

For then: 1. All hypocrisies will be revealed. Hypocrites will be troubled with horrible confusion, and the just will rise with strength against those who dominated and shone in the world, while they themselves were despised, rejected, unrecognised, poor, and oppressed. 2. All the most hidden secrets will be brought into the full light of day. Then glory will be rendered to God alone, and each one will receive according to his works.

This is the shield of patience which Saint Paul recommends in 1 Corinthians 4:5: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise from God." 3. God will judge us all without respect of persons; and no one will be forgotten: neither the poor nor the rich, neither the subject nor the king, neither the simple faithful nor the prelate.

Colossians 3:24-25: "Serve ye the Lord Christ. For he that doth wrong shall receive for that which he hath done wrongfully: and there is no respect of persons with God." The fifth cause of the wrath of the impious will be the reward given for the labours, tribulations, and good works of the saints in the service of God.

And that thou shouldst render reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, little and great. Saint John designates all these classes to make us understand that God will forget no one, and that there will be special rewards for each. Baruch 3:24: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his possession." And John 14:1-2: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions."

Finally, the sixth cause will be the general and universal extermination of all the wicked and all the impious of the earth. They will be destroyed from top to bottom: all those who, from the origin of the world - and especially at the end - have shed the blood of the just and oppressed their fellow men, corrupting the earth by their crimes. They will perish like Sodom, like Egypt, and like the men of the flood of whom Genesis 6:11 says: "The earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity." This universal extermination of the wicked is expressed in these words: And shouldst destroy them who have corrupted the earth.

III. VERSE 19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail. After the acclamations, praises, thanksgivings, and desires of the Church triumphant cited above, there follows the solemn coming of Jesus Christ in the air.

And the temple of God was opened in heaven. That is, the Son of man will come and appear upon the clouds. For He is the temple of the living God. Colossians 2:9: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally." And according to Saint John 2:21, He calls His body a temple.

And the ark of his testament was seen in his temple. That is, the Cross of Christ, the sign of the Son of man, will appear in heaven on the last day. Why is the sign of the Cross here called the ark of His testament? The reason is that, just as His testament and His secrets remained hidden and deposited in the ark of the covenant of the Old Testament until they were explained and renewed, so the Cross of Christ is the true ark of the New Testament, in which the mystery of our redemption will remain impenetrable to the eyes of the impious until the day of judgment.

Then the Cross will be manifested to their confusion, because they did not wish to accept its inheritance, considering that Cross as folly and scandal, according to Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:23: "We preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." But when this ark appears and they see it, they will groan - but too late. Apocalypse 1:7: "And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him." Scripture also says in John 19:37: "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

And there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail. The lightnings make us understand the immense terror which will descend from heaven; for the eternal Judge will come to judge the earth and the age by fire. The voices are the groanings, weepings, and gnashings of teeth of the wicked; and also the cries of joy, acclamations, and applause of the saints. The earthquake is the greatest that ever was, since the earth and the sea will render up their corpses; all the dead will come out of their tombs; and Christ will descend from heaven with thousands upon thousands of angels and saints to judge all men.

And there was great hail - that is, the greatest and most horrible storm, in the midst of which the damned will be cast with the demons into hell by the fire which will come out of the mouth of the sovereign Judge, Jesus Christ, who will say to them: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

All that was revealed to Saint John in this chapter concerning Antichrist and the Last Judgment is only a general and incidental description. The prophet's purpose in this was to end the whole of his revelation by the description of the seventh trumpet, omitting, so as not to break the course of his narration, several special and particular descriptions concerning the horrible reigns of Muhammad and Antichrist, and also concerning the last plagues, and so forth, which were revealed to him in the nine following chapters.

§ 3. Concordance of the Prophecy of Daniel with That of Saint John on the Two Last Circumstances of the End of the World

I. From the moment when the continual sacrifice shall have been abolished, and when Antichrist shall have entered into the fullness of his power, the prophet Daniel counts one thousand two hundred ninety days; while Saint John fixes forty-two months, which make three and a half years, and one thousand two hundred seventy-seven and a half days.

These two prophets therefore differ from one another by twelve and a half days. And this is with reason, for Daniel announces the fullness of the reign of Antichrist, whereas Saint John, who comes after him, announces that reign as it was shortened by divine mercy, as Jesus Christ expressly says in Saint Matthew 24:22: "If those days had not been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened." These days will therefore be shortened by twelve and a half days, by the fall of Antichrist, who, as has been said, will be cast down into hell at the moment when he wishes to rise into the heavens after Enoch and Elijah.

Thus Antichrist, having arrived at the fullness of his power - leaving aside the time during which he will make war upon all kingdoms and subject them all - will reign forty-two months, which make three and a half years, and one thousand two hundred seventy-seven and a half days. Now, if one subtracts this latter number from the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days which Daniel fixed for the duration of the last times, from the death of Antichrist until the dissolution of the world, there will remain to men only fifty-seven and a half days to do penance.

But since it is written in Saint Matthew 24:36: "Of that day and hour no one knoweth, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone," the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days of Daniel must be taken in an indeterminate sense with regard to the last hour and the last day, just as Saint John does in chapter 10, verse 7, when he also says in an indeterminate manner: "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound the trumpet, the mystery of God should be finished."

Moreover, Daniel cited the days as they were revealed to him. But the last day and the hour of the second coming of Jesus Christ were certainly not revealed to him in a precise manner, since Jesus Christ Himself says that they are reserved to the foreknowledge and will of His Father alone.

One may object that Saint John fixed one thousand two hundred sixty days for the duration of the testimony of the prophets Enoch and Elijah, and that after their death Antichrist will still reign twenty-four days. Now these two numbers added together make one thousand two hundred eighty-four days. Therefore Antichrist would reign more than forty-two months, and the shortening of those days of calamity would not take place.

The solution to this difficulty is found in this: these two prophets will have appeared to begin their mission by as many days before Antichrist enters into the fullness of his power. For this passage of chapter 11, verse 7: "The beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them," must be understood in the present and not in the past; that is, the beast will not make war against them after having fully ascended from the abyss, but while ascending from the abyss.

This concludes Book Five.

CHAPTER 12

The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

Revelation 12:1–18

Book Six: On Chapters Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen

Of Certain Special and Particular Revelations Made to Saint John Concerning the Reigns of Muhammad and Antichrist, the Last Plagues, and the Final Triumph of the Church; and Also Concerning Other Particular Matters Relating to Her.

Preliminary Observation

After Saint John had received the general revelation of the principal events of the whole course of the Church until the consummation of the ages, God made known to him in particular certain special, secret, hidden mysteries - as terrible as they are astonishing - which He would permit to be fulfilled in the various ages of the Church militant. These mysteries especially concern the reigns of Muhammad and Antichrist, and many other things which are contained in the following chapters under various figures and enigmas.

Section I: On Chapters Twelve and Thirteen - Of the War Which the Demon Has Made and Will Still Make Against the Church Through Chosroes, Muhammad, and Antichrist

The war described in the following chapters is the cruellest, the most violent, the most obstinate, and the longest that Lucifer, the prince of darkness, has ever undertaken in order to destroy the Church of God, if that were possible. But the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

This furious struggle began through the horrible tyrant Chosroes, who, after being conquered by Heraclius, stirred up in his place an even more horrible monster in the person of Muhammad, who seized the throne of the Persians and considerably extended his empire.

The reign of this hereditary and implacable enemy, who caused floods of Christian blood to be shed, continues to last; and although it must be considerably weakened in the age of the Church's consolation by the arm of the expected Monarch, nevertheless a portion of it will remain, restricted within narrow limits, until the son of perdition comes.

The latter, by obscure plots, will reach the throne of this empire, which he will revive and restore to such a point that he will subject almost everything to his power. Then Lucifer will use this last and most powerful sovereign of that reign to bring his fury against the Church of God to its height.

§ 1. On the War Which the Demon Raised Up Through Chosroes Against the Church. Chapter 12, Verses 1-18

I. VERSE 1. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. VERSE 2. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered. Under the figure of the woman described here, one must understand the militant Church of Christ upon earth. The prophet rightly represents her under the figure of a woman, since she is the spouse of Jesus Christ, and our mother, in that she makes us children of God by Baptism.

And a great sign appeared - that is, the Church, which is indeed a great visible sign in all times and throughout the whole earth. It is especially against this sign that the son of perdition will rise up, because of the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will blaspheme, and which few men will dare to confess under his reign of horrible tyranny.

It is said that this great sign appeared in heaven because the Church receives her light from heaven, a light which makes her visible throughout the whole world. And although she is upon the earth, exposed to the fury of persecutions, and continually agitated and beaten by the waves of the storm which this world raises against her, nevertheless she continues to remain under the protection of the God of heaven, who communicates to her the rays of His sun, and who will never permit any evils against her except those which His holy will, and that of His Christ, shall judge useful or necessary. For God is never nearer to His own whom He protects than when they are in the midst of the greatest dangers and the greatest evils.

This Church is compared to a woman clothed with the sun because Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Sun of justice, continually enlightens her, sustains her, and strengthens her by His divine assistance. He glorifies her and surrounds her with His all-powerful protection. Saint John announces her under the figure of a woman clothed with the sun because, at the end of times, in the days of her greatest tribulations, the Church will be more especially assisted by Jesus Christ, who will inspire and strengthen His elect - few in number, it is true - so that they may not succumb.

Having the moon under her feet. That is, the terrestrial globe, which increases and decreases like the moon, according as the Christians who form part of it diminish or multiply in the course of the ages. The Church is represented as having the moon under her feet because of the power which Jesus Christ has given her over the whole world, although, according to the will of God, and according as He communicates His light to the earth, the number of those who obey her increases or decreases according to the circumstances of the times.

It is specially remarked that this moon is under the feet of the Church. Now, in the last days, her feet will scarcely touch the earth, and Jesus Christ, the Sun of justice, and His Church, which reflects His light, will be eclipsed by the inhabitants of the terrestrial globe. For then there will be few men who confess His holy Name. The princes of the earth, and almost all the peoples who will oppose the light of this sun, will cover the surface of the globe like so many locusts, like the sand of the sea, or like the leaves of trees; and they will be cast into hell by the wrath of the Lamb.

And on her head a crown of twelve stars. These twelve stars signify all the saints who will rise up against the torrent of the impious, and who will fight for the Church and for her Christ, as the Apostles and the other saints did during the first centuries of the great persecutions. It is of all these saints that Daniel 12:3 says: "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many unto justice, as stars for all eternity." Thus these saints who will fight for the Church at the end of times will be her crown and ornament upon earth, as the stars are the ornament of heaven.

And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered. These words designate the terrible anguish, the deep sorrow, and the great dangers in which the Church militant and the Roman Empire - which is also represented here, in another literal sense, by the woman - were plunged, and will continue to be plunged, in the face of the dragon, the beast, and the false messiah. For the emperor Phocas, one of the most impious, most criminal, and most effeminate princes in the world, flooded the empire with his crimes.

Then Chosroes, king of the Persians, a very cruel tyrant, and the barbarians on their side, together caused such ravages that they left the Church and the Roman Empire scarcely able to subsist. Egypt, Palestine, Libya, and Jerusalem were invaded, and ninety thousand Christians were massacred in those horrible circumstances, which lasted until the accession of Heraclius. When this prince ascended the throne of the empire, he seized Armenia and defeated the army of Chosroes, putting him to flight by a memorable victory. After that, he triumphed over the Persians, whom he conquered in three great battles; and finally he recovered the true Cross of Jesus Christ from the infidels, in order to restore it to the Catholic Church.

Now it is these anguishes, these sorrows, these difficulties, and these dangers of the Church which Saint John describes under the enigma of a woman in the pains of childbirth. Indeed, the four principal circumstances of these trials of the Church of Christ find their figurative fulfilment in a woman giving birth. First: She was with child - that is, Heraclius, her son and future emperor. Second: She cried in her pain - that is, in her tribulations. Third: She was in anguish - that is, because of the pressing danger which threatened her. Fourth: She was in pain to be delivered, ardently and anxiously desiring, with fear and solicitude, finally to bring forth, by the help of divine mercy, a son full of strength and life - that is, a good emperor who would deliver her. This was in fact granted to her, although later this emperor fell into heresy, was abandoned by God, and perished miserably, as we shall see in what follows.

Second, the Church and the Roman Empire continued, more or less until the present day, to be plunged into sorrow, dangers, and anguish by the empire of Muhammad - that is, the empire of the Turks - which Christians must regard as a very fierce beast that, because of its diabolical instinct, will not cease to pursue the Church to the utmost. Third, this danger and these anguish will become extreme in the days of Antichrist, who will be the final representative of this infernal power, but also the most formidable and the most terrible, because the ancient serpent will inspire him in order to consummate his rage and vengeance.

Thus the enigma of the woman in childbirth does not refer to one single epoch, but to various circumstances in which God will always give her male children, strong and robust - that is, emperors, kings, and princes - who will defend and protect her and her Roman Empire, to prevent her from being devoured by this cruel beast. Although the Turkish Empire is presented in history with certain modifications, nevertheless, in reality and as a whole, it forms only one monarchy from Chosroes until Antichrist, because its sovereigns have one common goal: the extermination of Christianity and of the Roman Empire.

VERSE 3. And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. VERSE 4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And another sign appeared in heaven. This sign is represented in heaven because the dragon of the abyss, with all the impious, dares to rise up even to heavenly things in order to destroy them. But whatever their efforts may be, they are always repelled and restrained by divine power, and can do harm only as far as God permits.

And behold a great red dragon. The Latin text says et ecce - "and behold." These words are full of force, and call our whole attention to the horrible and frightful monster which the

prophet is about to describe. And behold a great red dragon. That is, Lucifer, the prince of all demons and of all tyrants, against whom Saint John takes care to put us on guard, lest he seduce us, by saying: "This great dragon, the ancient serpent, called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world, was cast unto the earth, and his angels with him."

This dragon is called great because of the immense power which God has permitted him to exercise against the saints, against the Church, and against the Roman Empire, particularly in the time of Chosroes, of Muhammad, and above all of Antichrist, who will be the epilogue and representative of all tyrants, all criminals, all sorceries, and all impostors. When a serpent grows to monstrous proportions, it is called a dragon. Now this will be especially fulfilled in the son of perdition; for this serpent will become very great by his victories, his power, his monstrous impostures, the multitude of his false miracles, and the variety and refinement of his stratagems.

This dragon appeared red to Saint John - that is, the colour of the blood with which he has stained himself from Abel and the first martyrs down to the last of the Christians whom this monster will cause to be immolated, through jealousy of the glory of God and of the holy Name of Jesus. It is of this dragon that Saint John says, John 8:44: "He was a murderer from the beginning," because he did not persevere in the truth, and lost the place God had given him. This dragon is also red because of the infernal fire in which he is tormented with his own for ages of ages. Likewise he is red because of his ancient jealousy, his rage, and his envy, which gives him a livid colour, so much does he burn with the desire to harm the human race and the Church of Christ, constantly seeking to devour Christians and to ruin their pious designs and good works, as red serpents and toads, which are regarded as very venomous, seek to harm men.

Finally, he is red because he is, and will be toward the end of times, very cunning and very subtle, as Jesus Christ warns us in Matthew 24:24: "So as to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

This dragon appeared to Saint John with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. These seven heads signify all the kings - or rather all the tyrants - who will reign in the Turkish monarchy until the end. By the ten horns are understood all the kingdoms that will be subject to the power of the dragon. It is said that this dragon has or possesses these heads and these horns because he rules these kings and kingdoms, and drives them to tyranny against Christians. He fights with them and in them, and through them he rages against Jesus Christ and His Church. It is also said that he will have seven diadems upon his heads because royal dignity will continue to subsist in the Turkish monarchy until the son of perdition, for this reign will not be totally destroyed.

The ten horns are also ten kings, more or less powerful, who, toward the end of times, after the Roman Empire has been destroyed, will crown themselves. Each of them will wish to have his own kingdom apart. But the son of perdition will conquer them and subject them to his domination. And it is thus that he will acquire great power, for he will use these kings as his horns to fight and ruin all things, after the manner of the animal whose strength is in its horns.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. By the tail one understands the consequences of this diabolical monarchy, which in fact drew along and enveloped the third part of the stars of heaven - that is, of the Greek Church, which separated little by little from the Roman Church after having been soiled by various errors on the occasion of the sect of Muhammad and under the yoke of the Turkish monarchy. This Greek Church is represented by the stars of heaven because formerly it flourished and shone like the stars by a great number of saints and doctors, to such a point that we ourselves must

recognise that almost all the lights, and especially the greatest, of the Church of Christ shone principally in the primitive Church and in the Greek Church.

And he cast them to the earth. That is, the Greek Church was scattered and will remain thus in her sad state under the domination of the Turkish Empire until the time of the son of perdition. It is true that in the sixth age, when this Turkish Empire has been restricted within narrower limits, the Greek Church will once again be reunited with the Latin Church. But since that epoch will be short in comparison with the length of this reign, this reconciliation with our holy mother the Church cannot be regarded as constant and durable. Moreover, this Greek Church will be almost the first of all which, at the end of times, will adhere to the son of perdition and to his false prophets, and will turn against the woman clothed with the sun - that is, against the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Then, according to her old diabolical habit, she will set herself to reproduce her errors concerning the nature of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit; and she will adore, and will cause to be adored upon the earth, a false saviour of the world, and the most criminal of impostors, Antichrist. Likewise, by the tail are designated false Christians and false prophets, who, like the tail of a dragon, will be filled with the venom of the most pestilential doctrine, and will adhere to Satan in an inseparable manner, following him wherever he goes, and acting according to his will and the power which he will possess by the permission of God. They will seduce many men, according to the prophecy of Jesus Christ, Matthew 24:24: "For false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

By the stars of heaven one also understands the doctors, religious, and even ecclesiastics of the Latin Church, who, in those last days, seeing that everything is overturned, and that God appears as though asleep and even as though powerless to restrain the impious to whom He will permit everything, will take scandal and will allow themselves to be seduced by the prodigies of the false prophets, and will defect. They will give themselves over to the pleasures of the flesh, will marry, and will plunge their hearts into illicit loves and the concupiscence of women. For then celibacy and the holy virtue of chastity will be considered a scandal and an object of derision. The times of Noah will be seen again, when all flesh had corrupted its ways; and then God will destroy the universe, not by water, but by fire.

And he cast them to the earth. That is, these apostates, united in heart and spirit with the false prophets, will adhere to their false doctrine and will work to trouble the Church of Christ in a horrible manner. They will commit very great scandals. They will seduce peoples and nations, and will persecute their brothers and their superiors who will not wish to walk in the way of their abominations. Hence the warning which Jesus Christ gives us in Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death; and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be scandalised, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved."

III. VERSE 5. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, that when she should be delivered, he might devour her son. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her son was taken up to God and to his throne. This standing before and in the face of the woman designates excessive and very pressing violence, as well as a continual and sustained tyranny against the Church of Christ and her Roman Empire.

Satan first exercised this violence in the person of Chosroes, king of the Persians, who is one with Satan. This is why he is called the dragon in a secondary and instrumental sense,

because he was its tail and because he tended toward one only goal: to make the Name of Jesus Christ and of His Church disappear. The same applies, and even more so, to Muhammad, and consequently to his tyrannical empire, which will last one thousand two hundred sixty years and will be renewed by Antichrist, the son of perdition.

For it is admitted once for all as certain that this very cruel and very long war of the dragon was undertaken and begun by Chosroes, that it was continued for a very long time by Muhammad and his Turkish Empire, and that it will end by Antichrist, who will commit more crimes during the days of his reign than all the preceding ones will have produced in as many years. These days are indicated by Daniel and by Saint John, as has been said above. Besides this, we shall speak of it more at length later.

Everyone must therefore know that under the enigma of the dragon, the great chief and great director of the impious, and under the enigmas of the beasts, horns, heads, waters, and women, all the abominations of this war are described by Saint John, who himself is astonished by them, because these are indeed great and truly astonishing tribulations, which will more or less ruin the Church and in which the elect will be tried as by fire. For this reason the dragon, Chosroes, Muhammad, all the successors of his sect in the Turkish Empire, and also the son of perdition, who will be its completion, are all declared enemies of the holy Name of Jesus and of His Church, and constitute one moral body, which is the beast or the dragon.

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered. These words signify great anguish and a very pressing danger of perishing, in which the Church and the Roman Empire found themselves in the time of the emperor Phocas, under whose reign Chosroes occupied a very great part of that empire. For he devastated all the churches, treated the faithful inhumanly, caused them to be cruelly massacred, seized the city of Jerusalem - where ninety thousand Christians were put to the sword - and carried off the true Cross of the Saviour. And if divine mercy had not raised up for the Church a powerful deliverer in her son Heraclius, this cruel tyrant, who had grown great by so many depredations and by so many kingdoms which he had seized, would perhaps have ended by devouring everything like a furious dragon.

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, that when she should be delivered, he might devour her son. Chosroes, in fact, having become insolent by his victories, absolutely wished to devour and destroy Heraclius when he ascended the throne of the empire, which had just suffered such violent blows. For Chosroes, swollen by his victories and full of confidence in the extent of his power and in the valour of his armies, refused to conclude a treaty of peace with Heraclius, even on the most humiliating conditions for that emperor.

IV. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. This was Heraclius, who was raised to the empire, and who truly showed manly strength from the beginning of his reign. He repressed the insolence of Chosroes by brilliant victories, cut to pieces several of his most formidable armies, occupied Persia, replanted the holy Cross upon Mount Calvary, and finally showed himself truly worthy to reign over all nations. And God would perhaps have granted him this advantage if he had not turned away from Him by supporting the heresy of the Monothelites. Thus, as much as the happy beginning of his reign was pleasing to God and to the Church, and useful to the empire, so much did he himself become miserable and odious afterward. Let kings, princes, and the powerful of the age learn from this example what they can do with the help and friendship of God, and how powerless and unhappy they become, on the contrary, when they turn away from Him.

Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. By this rod of iron one understands a very great and very strong power, which God would have given to Heraclius to subject to his dominion and to hold in obedience and servitude the barbarous nations, if he had not separated himself from Him, and if he had not corrupted his ways by falling into heresy. This is why Saint John speaks conditionally, and not absolutely: Who was to rule, etc.

And her son was taken up to God and to his throne. These words express the protection of God toward Heraclius, and His eternal counsels against his enemies; and also the brilliant victories and the elevation of this prince to the throne of the empire. These are indeed gifts which come from God, and which He distributes as He pleases. Let one read the history of the wars, victories, and pious acts of this emperor, when he was still defending the cause of God and fighting so valiantly for the Cross of His Christ, and one will clearly see the finger of God in the crowning of this emperor, and in his brilliant triumph over the most powerful and most formidable enemies, with very weak human means. But because he abandoned the ways of justice and truth, he himself was abandoned by God, and afterward suffered every kind of misfortune and misery. His defection gave entrance to the beast in one of the most powerful, most stable, and longest reigns in the history of the world, extending from Muhammad until Antichrist.

V. VERSE 6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred sixty days. When God had seen that Christianity and the Empire of the East could not sustain themselves in the face of the beast, and that the Catholic faith itself was beginning to be darkened by the smoke of pride, and to be soiled by the mud of arrogance of which the faithful themselves were guilty toward the Holy See; and when He had seen the darkness of heresies and schisms gradually entering into the Church, He transported both her and her Roman Empire into Germany, the principal part of which was still buried in the errors of paganism.

Therefore, wishing to show clemency toward the German race, God sent to it great saints of the ever-renowned Order of Saint Benedict, who successively converted it to the Catholic faith. Let it be permitted to cite here some of these apostolic names: Saint Goar converted the inhabitants of Trier; Saint Rupert with his companions converted Bavaria; Saint Pirminius converted western Saxony; Saint Gisalonius was the apostle of Austria. The British Isles received the light of faith from Saint Richard the abbot, Saint Augustine, Saint Boniface, and several other holy doctors. Saint Wilfrid converted the peoples of Frisia, and Saint Kilian those of Franconia. It is thus that the whole German race found itself established at the centre of the felicity and light of the faith of Christ by these holy apostles, and by many others still whom God sent to it.

The beast trembled with rage. Germany, which previously could be considered as a vast solitude or a desert, was thus fertilised by the doctrine of these holy apostles and watered by the blood of several among them, who sealed by martyrdom the truths they preached. This is why the Apostle says: And the woman fled into the wilderness. That is, God transported His Church into the West and particularly into Germany, regions which are metaphorically designated by the wilderness: first, because a wilderness is not inhabited, and there is no social life there; second, because deserts are ordinarily the lairs of wild beasts.

Now Germany and England - that is, the British Isles toward the North and West - were as though filled with wild beasts, that is, priests of idols and idolaters, who trembled with rage at the voice of the Gospel. Moreover, since faith and the true God had not yet dwelt in and enlightened these regions, the prophet calls them a wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God - that is, He had disposed these regions of the West to receive the Catholic faith, and consequently the Church of Jesus Christ, which is metaphorically figured by the woman, as has been said above. God did indeed predispose Germany and the western regions

of Europe to receive the Catholic faith by the lights of His grace which He spread in hearts, and by the outward and sensible lights of His apostles.

That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred sixty days. These words designate the proper duration of the refuge of the Church of Jesus Christ in the West. And this duration will be one thousand two hundred sixty years; for here the days count as years, as often happens in Scripture. The beginning of this time dates from the origin of the Turkish monarchy, and also from the beginning of the conversion of the English and of the western nations. As in the Old Testament the people of Israel continually had an hereditary enemy in the Gentiles, so the Christian people and the Church of Christ will always have the Turkish nation and all the barbarous peoples of the sect of Muhammad as adversaries until the end of times.

This beast will indeed receive a great blow and a deep wound from the great Monarch, who will take from it the empire of Constantinople with a great part of its territory. But Antichrist, who will be the eighth horn of the beast, will heal its wound, and will even strengthen this beast so considerably that it will occupy almost all states, and will even reach a supreme degree of elevation among all the other kingdoms. I have said that it will occupy almost all states; for Antichrist, who will rise up on the ash tree of the Turkish monarchy, in the lands where the great Monarch will have relegated it, will re-establish its empire and render it more powerful than ever.

And the woman fled into the wilderness to be fed there. That is, to be maintained and preserved there. This is indeed what God, in His paternal goodness, granted to the Church of the West, and what He will grant her until the end of times: the ability to preserve her faith by the preaching of the Gospel and by the examples of her saints. In every time and in every century, God has always sent workers into His vineyard to cultivate it; and it is thus that He prevented this vineyard, or this Church, from perishing, especially in the frightening hurricane of the heresy of Luther.

VI. VERSE 7. And there was a great battle in heaven. Saint John describes in the following words the war that arose when Saint Michael and the guardian angels worked to establish the Church of the West, and when the dragon, with his evil angels, made every effort to oppose it and even to destroy it. And there was a great battle in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought against him. Saint Michael is the protector of the Church militant, and his angels are the guardians of the churches, kingdoms, and all Christendom.

Saint Michael is the prince and chief of those thousands of angels who fight, according to the will of God, against the power of darkness, in order to protect and preserve the Church, which is more or less extended throughout the whole earth according to the circumstances of the times, and which is entrusted to the guardianship of this archangel. The dragon, on the contrary, is Lucifer, the ancient serpent, the devil and Satan. His angels are the other evil and reprobate spirits whom he sends over the whole surface of the globe to make the Church and the Name of Christ disappear from it.

Thus, while the first worked to spread the Christian faith in Europe, the second did everything to oppose and destroy it, by soliciting the souls of converted nations to defect, and by exciting them to sedition, wars, tyranny, persecution, and hatred against the priests and apostles of Christ. Moreover, they stirred up false brothers, sons of Belial, within the bosom of the Church through heresies, so that these might cast trouble and confusion among the new Christians by scandal, with the aim of making them odious to the other nations which were still in darkness, and to prevent those nations from converting.

But despite all these efforts attempted by the dragon and by his rebellious angels, neither seditions, nor wars, nor defections, nor the shedding of the blood of martyrs, nor so many other difficulties of every kind were able to prevent the conversion of Germany and of the western nations, because this holy work was under the special protection of God, who showed Himself sensitive to the prayers and sacrifices of all the holy apostles of Germany, and even of the whole of Europe. So the power, combats, labours, skill, and extreme vigilance of Saint Michael and of his holy angels prevailed and obtained a full triumph.

VERSE 8. But they were the weaker, and their place was found no more in heaven. That is, in the Church of Germany and the West, either to prevent the Church from being born there, or to destroy her afterward. For the Catholic faith was established and spread far and wide throughout all Europe by the power and piety of Charlemagne, around the year 800.

VERSE 9. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. That is, Satan and his whole army were repelled, scattered, proscribed, and put to flight by Saint Michael and his angels, as a king is accustomed to repel an enemy who has dared to penetrate into his kingdom.

Saint John here explains literally what must be understood by the word dragon: namely, Lucifer, who is called a dragon because of the extent of his power, the subtlety and penetration of his intelligence, and his excessive cunning. We find an idea of this in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Now this passage must not be understood only of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also of the Church, against whom the gates of hell shall not prevail.

VII. From this one sees how important it is for bishops, prelates, parish priests, and other pastors of souls to watch over the flock entrusted to them, since Lucifer, with thousands of demons, works at every hour and without ceasing for the ruin of souls. These pastors have all the more means of guarding their sheep because they possess in the Holy Spirit a high understanding of all things, and because they are appointed by God to govern the Church.

Finally, from what has just been said above, it follows how much Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves admiration, thanksgiving, and confidence from men who, although blinded by sin, are nevertheless protected in a wholly paternal manner, in the midst of so many dangers and snares, by the holy angels, whom we ought therefore to repay by tender love in invoking them. Only after having abandoned our mortal flesh shall we clearly see the horrible dangers which we ran, and which we were able to avoid only by the special protection of the holy angels. But we too must always watch, so as not to give entrance to the demon into our souls. This is what Saint Peter, who is the fundamental column of the Church of Christ, warns us of when he says in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, strong in faith."

And that great dragon was cast unto the earth, and his angels with him. By the earth, Saint John here designates the empire and Church of the East, of which it was said that he stood before the woman in the time of Chosroes. For, having been driven out and rejected from the Church of the West, it was permitted to him to continue to exercise his fury with his own in the East, because of the wickedness and sins of those nations, and to punish, by Muhammad and by the Turkish monarchy, the pride, avarice, ambition, heresies, and schisms of the Greek Church, which had been so long rebellious against the Roman Pontiffs, as we shall see further on.

VIII. VERSE 10. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. In these words follows the

joy and the testimonies of gratitude of the Church triumphant, because of the conversion of Germany and the western regions of Europe; for it belongs to the character of the saints to rejoice in good and to have aversion for evil. This voice is the voice of the conqueror - that is, of Saint Michael, who returns triumphantly into heaven after having ended his military expedition in his quality as commander-in-chief and protector of the Church militant upon earth.

Salvation comes from God, and it is granted to the nations through their conversion to the Catholic faith, without which, Saint Paul says, it is impossible to please God and obtain eternal life. Strength signifies the grace, the lights, and the miracles of the Spirit of the Lord, who sent holy and valiant workers to these nations, to bring them out of the darkness and shadow of death where they were seated, and to lead them to the truth of the faith and into the sheepfold of the elect. The kingdom indicates the submission and obedience with which these nations began to serve God their Creator and to adore Him, instead of serving idols and adoring demons, to whom they had been miserably subject before. Finally, the power of Christ signifies the jurisdiction that was acquired by the Church militant over these peoples and these nations, a power called the power of Christ because He Himself acquired it by His precious blood, in order then to give it to His Church upon earth.

Because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before God day and night. That is, the power of the dragon was proscribed and banished from hearts, as were the idolatry, imposture, and falsehood with which these nations had been soiled before. This dragon is called by the saints of the Church triumphant the accuser of our brethren, because his inborn pride continually drives him to reproach before God human fragility and the imperfections of our corrupted nature, as he did with regard to Job. Thus, despising the extreme simplicity of the monks who evangelised Germany, Satan regarded it as impossible that nations endowed with such great human prudence, and peoples so barbarous, so warlike, and so powerful, would allow themselves to be turned away from their idolatry and converted by the voice of those simple monks, deprived of all human means.

VERSE 11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony which they gave, and they loved not their lives unto death. Here Saint John expresses the victory and triumph which the servants and workers of Christ, aided by His grace, won over Satan and his angels, by gradually bringing all the nations of Germany and the western regions into the fold of the Good Shepherd. The Apostle attributes this great victory to three principal causes: to the Blood of the Lamb; to the testimony which the martyrs rendered to His word; and to contempt of life even to the suffering of death. For it is by His adorable Blood that Christ fertilised His Church. And it is by the preaching of the Gospel that the faith has been propagated throughout all the earth. The blood of the martyrs was like a seed which multiplied Christians; and these Christians became the branches of the vine of the Lord.

And they loved not their lives unto death. That is, they gave themselves, for love of the holy Name of Jesus and for the conversion of souls, to all hardships, afflictions, dangers of life, and even death itself. VERSE 12. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein. These words express the peace, joy, happiness, gladness, and rest of the Church militant, as well as congratulations upon her victory and triumph. It is thus that a king is accustomed to congratulate his capital and his kingdom, even ordering public rejoicings after having pursued and scattered the enemies who had seized part of his states.

IX. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. These words announce a great woe for the Greek Church and for the whole East. This woe was indeed manifested by many tribulations and persecutions, and by a great tyranny and humiliating servitude on the part of the sect of

Muhammad. God permitted these evils as punishment for the hardening of the Greek Church and for the sins of the nations of the East.

The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath. Satan is the implacable and hereditary enemy of the human race; and if he cannot succeed in harming men in some part of the world, he becomes irritated, enraged, and trembles with fury. Then he takes vengeance, so far as God permits him to rage, and he ruins and destroys everything. Now, since Satan had just suffered a great defeat and a shameful flight in the Church of the West, he said in his anger, Matthew 12:44: "I will return into my house from whence I came out."

Knowing that he hath but a short time. These words show the dark envy and inexplicable ingratitude of the dragon toward his Creator, so good, so lovable, so beneficent, so merciful, and so liberal, who created Lucifer from nothing, and constituted him and all his rebellious angels in great power, wisdom, and intelligence, and endowed them all with magnificent qualities and brilliant advantages. Despite this generosity of God toward them, they revolted against Him; and now the time seems too short to them to satisfy their unbridled desire and their ardent thirst for vengeance, by exhaling their rage and jealousy and manifesting their pride and presumption against the goodness of their Creator and against the human race, whose nature was united to the Word of God.

Indeed, the principal times of the Old Testament for losing souls have passed for him; and in the law of grace he is bound and limited in his power. And since the time for doing harm and satisfying his vengeance is very short in relation to eternity, in which he will be chained with his own in horrible places of torment, the demon is filled with great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.

VERSE 13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child. This male child was the emperor Charlemagne, whom the Church brought forth by raising him to the Roman Empire in the year of Jesus Christ 800. He was the first of the emperors of Germany, and showed himself an admirable protector of the Latin and Western Church. For he defended, exalted, and propagated her with all his power.

When the dragon had seen that he could not prevent the conversion of Germany and the western nations, he persecuted the woman - that is, the Latin Church - by stirring up troubles, seditions, and parties within her bosom. This is what happened in fact under Pope Leo III, who found himself forced to call Charlemagne to the help of the Church, to restore to her peace and security. This emperor was therefore a second male child whom the Church truly brought forth, since it was Leo III who crowned him and declared him emperor.

It is also said that the dragon persecuted the woman because this serpent is implacable in his wrath and jealousy against the human race and against the Church of Christ. And when he does not manage to hinder the truth and justice of God, he does not cease to tempt and torment men by raising up against them every kind of opposition and misfortune. This is what every Christian experiences only too much in his cruel and horrible temptations against faith, purity, and the other virtues. And the author of all these evils is Satan, who cannot bear that we live piously in the Lord. Let us therefore console ourselves if we are tested by many temptations, because this is a sign that we are friends of God and that we are walking in the paths of eternal life.

VERSE 14. And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. This great eagle was Charlemagne and all his successors in the Roman Empire; for Charlemagne transported this empire into the West. The two wings of this eagle are all the states of that power, which was so great that it rose like the eagle

into the air and dominated the land of Europe.

These wings of the great eagle were given to the woman - that is, to the Church of the West. And it is with these wings that this Church rose up and will continue to sustain herself for one thousand two hundred sixty years, which are a time, and times, and half a time. For one thousand years are a time of ten centuries; two hundred years are times of two centuries; and sixty years are approximately half a time, or half a century, during which the Church of the West will continue to exist. These years must be counted from the beginning of the sect of Muhammad and from the epoch when God transplanted His Church into the West.

That she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. These words signify that the Church of Christ, which was never stable in the East, would take root in the West - that is, in the wilderness - and would fix there her dwelling or her seat, which she would preserve for one thousand two hundred sixty years.

This comparison is taken from birds which go in search of forests, trees, or other favourable places, especially along waters and in mountains, in order to live there in safety from hunters. It is in these places of retreat that they like to fix their nests, to lay their eggs there, and to multiply. Now it is in this way that the Church of Christ, fleeing the presence of the serpent in the East, flew with swift wings to fix her retreat in the West, where she multiplied and begot millions of faithful for eternal life.

That she might fly into the wilderness. This flight also signifies the liberty of the Church, liberty which may be compared to birds that fly by their own wings. And it is thus that the Church of Christ will always enjoy in the West the liberty of professing the Catholic faith through the wings of the great eagle - that is, through the power and protection of the Roman Empire. And it is with the wings of this eagle that she will always fly and continue to possess her nest in the West, to multiply her race there according to the eternal designs of the divine will. For all the emperors of this Roman Empire will be Catholic until the last.

That she might fly into the wilderness - that is, into Germany, unto her place. Although heresies and defections have taken from the Church a multitude of faithful in the West, she nevertheless always preserved there her place of retreat, which God reserved for her, as may be seen in the history of the western nations.

Unto her place, from the face of the serpent. Because toward the end of times - that is, under the reign of Antichrist - the Church will have her place of retreat in the West, and will hide herself in the mountains, in arid or desert places, and in the clefts of rocks. This is why Jesus Christ says in Matthew 24:16: "Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains; and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house; and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat."

VERSE 15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water, as a river, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. The water which the serpent cast from his mouth like a river against the woman signifies the great tribulations which Lucifer stirred up against the Latin Church through the schisms which split her continually for the space of two hundred years. The water represents the peoples and their numerous armies, which Satan caused to be put in motion by the avarice and ambition of emperors, in order to introduce false popes and false bishops into the Latin Church.

It is enough to read on this subject the deplorable tragedies of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and one will understand what is signified by these waters cast against the woman by the serpent. It is expressly said that the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a river against the woman, because the tribulation of this schism was very great, and had

to last very long. Just as a river contains much water which flows continually, so the deplorable schisms of the Latin Church in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries were like a torrent of calamities, wars, and continual tribulations.

That is, to make the faith of Jesus Christ disappear from Germany and the West. But God came to her aid, always compressing all these schisms in time, until at last they were completely extinguished. VERSE 16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. Indeed, these schisms were never able to prevail. And when these schismatics fought the Church and wished to force her by their armies to accept their shameful idols, which they obstinately tried to introduce upon the pontifical see and upon episcopal sees, these armies perished, and their corpses were swallowed or buried in the bosom of the earth. It was by this that the Church recovered her rest and stability.

VERSE 17. And the dragon was angry against the woman. That is, against the Latin or Western Church, which is the greatest, the most extended, and the most populous. And the dragon was angry against the woman because he was never able to conquer her, whatever means he undertook to harm her.

And he went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The other children of this woman are the Christians of the Greek Church, who are scattered in the East, and whom the dragon, after the shameful defeat he suffered in the West, set himself to persecute to the utmost. VERSE 18. And he stood upon the sand of the sea. These words show us this dragon on the shores of the sea, plunged into deep meditation on the evils he will be able to imagine in order to avenge himself upon his enemies, and to satisfy his jealousy and his black envy. This is indeed what he did, and what he will continue to do literally, through the sect of Muhammad, through his tyrannical monarchy, and through the schisms of the Greeks.

This completes Book Six, Section I, § 1: Revelation 12:1-18.

CHAPTER 13

The Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the Earth

Revelation 13:1–18

§ 2. On the War Which the Demon Made Through Muhammad, and Will Make Again Through Antichrist. Chapter 13, Verses 1-10

I. VERSE 1. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. VERSE 2. And the beast which I saw was like to a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his strength and great power. This beast which rises up out of the sea is the empire of Muhammad, or the empire of the Turks, of which Daniel speaks in chapter 7, verse 7. It is said that this beast rises up out of the sea because its kingdom took birth between the seas; for Muhammad was first the chief of the Arabs.

This beast had seven heads, which signifies the universality of the kings who will govern this empire until the consummation of the ages. Its ten horns represent the universality of the kingdoms and provinces which are subject to this empire, and those which will still be subject to it in the time of Antichrist, as we shall see further on. The ten kings are those among whom this empire will one day be divided; and they will destroy it for a time and deliver it to the beast.

And upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. These ten diadems are royal crowns. The names of blasphemy are the titles of the Turkish emperors, which show astonishing pride and contain blasphemies against the majesty, glory, and honour of God, who alone is great, all-powerful, of infinite wisdom, Creator of heaven and earth, and Founder of all kingdoms. The names of blasphemy are also the Muslim sects and the Qur'an, or the law of Muhammad, in which falsehoods and monstrous blasphemies are contained.

It is said that these names of blasphemy are upon his heads because all those who will reign in this empire will be animated by the same spirit in favour of this sect; they will defend it by force and violence to prevent it from perishing. Finally, the names of blasphemy are the doctrine of Antichrist, who will be the last horn of this infernal beast, as we shall see in chapter 14.

And the beast which I saw was like to a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. This beast is compared to the leopard because of its swiftness, power, strength, ferocity, and pride; because, during its reign, it will be very rapacious and very cruel toward all Christendom; and it will be so especially through its last horn, which will be Antichrist.

And his feet were as the feet of a bear. This is said because of the extent of his empire, which will be immense, especially under the last horn. The particular character of this monarchy was to invade and occupy everything; and when the Turks once laid siege to a city, they spared nothing to seize it, and did not raise the siege until after having carried it by assault,

in order then to continue their devastations. It is said that this empire, so cruel and so formidable, has very strong and very large feet, like those of the bear, because it was to occupy kingdoms, provinces, cities, islands, and every kind of territory; and because Antichrist will tread under foot the Holy of Holies and all sacred objects, like a bear in fury.

And his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. For this empire will break and tear to pieces all the kingdoms of the earth, especially under the last horn. Daniel 7:7 and following: "I beheld afterwards in the vision of the night, and lo, a fourth beast, terrible and wonderful, and exceedingly strong; it had great iron teeth, eating and breaking in pieces, and treading down the rest with its feet. And it was unlike to the other beasts which I had seen before it, and had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold another little horn sprung out of the midst of them; and three of the first horns were plucked up at the presence thereof. And behold eyes like the eyes of a man were in this horn, and a mouth speaking great things."

Daniel continues: "After this I would diligently learn concerning the fourth beast, which was very different from all, and exceeding terrible; his teeth and claws were of iron; he devoured and broke in pieces, and the rest he stamped upon with his feet. And concerning the ten horns that he had on his head; and concerning the other that came up, before which three horns fell; and of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and was greater than the rest. I beheld, and lo, that horn made war against the saints, and prevailed over them." And again: "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be greater than all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth and shall tread it under foot. And the ten horns of the same kingdom shall be ten kings; and another shall rise up after them, and he shall be mightier than the former, and he shall bring down three kings. And he shall speak words against the High One, and shall crush the saints of the Most High; and he shall think himself able to change times and laws, and they shall be delivered into his hand until a time, and times, and half a time. And judgment shall sit, that his power may be taken away, and be broken in pieces, and perish for ever."

Thus this beast, or this Turkish monarchy, will break and devour everything. The universe will be astonished by it; and it will become the scandal and ruin of souls.

And the dragon gave him his strength and great power. Satan can communicate his strength and power in two ways: first, by his assistance, by his evil counsels, and by producing supernatural effects - such was the power that he gave to Muhammad and to his empire; this first manner is extrinsic. The second is intrinsic, and it will take place when Satan will, so to speak, clothe himself with the body and soul of Antichrist, and will become one with him. Now God has never yet permitted this manner to Satan; but it will be granted to him in the son of perdition.

This is why Lucifer, who is the proudest creature that exists, always seeking in his jealousy to imitate the Divinity in all things, will enter into Antichrist, will form him, will possess him, and will, in some way, clothe himself with his body and soul from the moment of his conception in his mother's womb. He will subsist in him in an intrinsic manner and will dwell in him corporally, so that Antichrist, who according to Daniel 7:7 will be a terrible and wonderful beast, will work incredible prodigies by the strength and great power of Lucifer, by whom he will be possessed.

And just as the Word of God truly and hypostatically united Himself to human nature, and by this union the Divinity communicated to the humanity the strength and power to work miracles, in order to prove that He is truly the Son of God, so Satan will strive to demonstrate by great prodigies that the divinity dwells spiritually in Antichrist. And he will succeed in persuading almost all men of this, except those whose names are written in the book of life.

No one should imagine that I speak inconsistently by confusing the beast with Antichrist; for the prophets are accustomed, in their enigmas, to present and comprehend under one single figure several things which will happen at different times, when those things have some relation to one another. Now, since Muhammad and his successors, and especially Antichrist, who will be the final completion of all prevarication, have one common goal, which is to deny and destroy the holy Name of Jesus, it is consistent to say that all of them together are one moral body and one beast.

And it is especially to Antichrist that the name of the beast properly belongs, because he will be the most criminal and the most powerful of all the Turkish monarchs, and because his empire will be the last, the widest, and the most powerful; for his tyrannical reign will sum up all the others. He will rage and roar like a lion against the holy Name of Jesus; and he will tread under foot the Holy of Holies like a bear.

Finally, whoever denies that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came upon the earth and was made flesh like us, is an antichrist; and all those who act in this way constitute one single body, of which Antichrist, the son of perdition, is the head and the tail. Hence these words of 1 John 2:18: "As you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are many antichrists." That is, he has come in his members and in his forerunners, while awaiting the time when he will come in person to consummate the prevarication.

II. VERSE 3. And I saw one of his heads as it were slain to death; and his death's wound was healed. And all the earth was in admiration after the beast. These words contain a hidden and difficult meaning. First, it is said that one of his heads was as it were wounded to death; that is, the beast will receive a mortal wound, because it will in fact happen that the Turkish Empire, or the empire of Muhammad, will suffer a great defeat and an almost complete ruin, to such a point that it will be as though annihilated, since there will remain from it only a portion, like a small kingdom.

But Antichrist will raise this empire up again; for he will occupy its throne and repair all its losses. He will even enlarge it immensely, much more than it ever was before. Antichrist will be born and will draw his origin from the remnants of this empire brought to ruin. One may see, in the prophecies cited above, that Daniel says the same thing when, speaking with great admiration of this little horn which rose up from the midst of the ten horns, he adds that it had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth that spoke great things, and that this horn was greater than the others.

And his death's wound was healed. This will truly be accomplished by Antichrist, who will re-establish the reign of the nations which had previously fallen almost entirely into ruin. And this reign of Antichrist will be greater than all the other reigns of the earth since the origin of the world. This is also what Daniel says in chapter 7, verse 23: "The fourth kingdom shall be greater than all the kingdoms; it shall devour the whole earth and shall tread it under foot."

And all the earth was in admiration after the beast. The meaning of these last words is therefore that the whole universe, seeing this power of the beast rise above all earthly powers, will be in the greatest admiration. Men will be as though ravished in ecstasy because of his prodigies; and they will follow the beast - that is, the doctrine of Antichrist. They will do even more.

III. VERSE 4. And they adored the dragon who gave power to the beast; and they adored the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who shall be able to fight with him? These words are connected in an admirable way with the preceding words. For all nations will adore Lucifer incorporated in Antichrist, since they will consider him to be the divinity and will believe that the divinity exists in him, because of his power and the great prodigies that he will work by the help of Lucifer, and also because of the knowledge, understanding, and

great wonders which will come out of his mouth and which will be suggested to him by the prince of demons.

Lucifer is indeed the prince of demons, because he is raised above all the other infernal spirits by the most perfect qualities that evil angels can possess. And it is with the help of this astonishing power that the son of perdition will work the greatest prodigies. The true God, Creator of heaven and earth, will permit these wonders in order to chastise the men who, in those last days, will put the finishing touch to all prevarication. Thus, when men see these great prodigies of Antichrist, all nations will render worship to him and will adore him as God and the Messiah, just as we ourselves adore the Son of Man because of His Divinity.

Who is like to the beast, and who shall be able to fight with him? These words signify a universal apostasy, by which men will separate themselves from the God of heaven and earth, and especially from His Son made flesh, Jesus Christ. So it will be that all nations, the Jews, and even many Christians, seeing the power, wisdom, and great prodigies of this monster, will allow themselves to be seduced because of their wickedness and their enormous sins. For God will abandon them to their reprobate sense. And all these seduced men will say in their blindness: Who is like to the beast, and who shall be able to fight with him?

These words contain a horrible blasphemy against the God of heaven and against His Christ; that is, against the essence and almighty power of God, Creator of heaven and earth, whose second Person became man and dwelt among us. Now in those last days, the impious will dare to attribute these divine advantages to the son of perdition, because of the astonishing power and great prodigies which God will permit him to manifest. And they will adore Antichrist as God and the Messiah, saying: Who is like to the beast, and who shall be able to fight with him? These words are therefore the greatest blasphemy of which men can make themselves guilty against the God of heaven and earth and against His Christ; against the saints, His servants, His prophets, His martyrs; and against all that is most sacred. For they suppose that everything that exists and that comes from God is inferior to what comes from Lucifer; that is, inferior to the beast, which is the greatest monstrosity that has ever existed and that ever will exist. We find examples of this blasphemy in Pharaoh, and especially in Goliath.

IV. VERSE 5. And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given to him to act forty-two months. This passage and the following express the power which God will permit the beast to exercise, and because of which all nations will listen to him and will adore him as God. First, it is said: And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Here the prophet designates the instrumental cause for the principal cause; and this cause is the great wisdom and astonishing knowledge which the dragon will communicate to Antichrist, in such a way that from his mouth will come things great, admirable, plausible in appearance, mysterious, and raised above all human intelligence. And it is above all by this that he will seduce all nations and lead them to believe that he is God and the Messiah - a mouth speaking blasphemies against the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and against the whole New Testament.

And power was given to him to act forty-two months. These forty-two months are the time of the reign of the beast. If this time is applied to the Turkish Empire, it will last as many years as there are days in forty-two months, from its origin until Antichrist. And if it is applied to the reign of this son of perdition alone, the days must be counted according to their natural sense, so that the duration of this last reign will be three and a half years. Thus the Turkish Empire will last approximately as many years as the reign of Antichrist will last days, including the time when the beast will be as though wounded to death. For although the beast must be wounded to death - that is, although the Turkish Empire must suffer a great

ruin - it will nevertheless not perish totally, and a seed of it will remain until the son of perdition comes to enter into the kingdom reserved for him.

VERSE 6. And he opened his mouth unto blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. It is said that the beast opened his mouth; that is, Antichrist, who had previously kept silent, will open his mouth when he is seated in the fullness of his reign. And he will speak not only by himself, but also by his false prophets and by his false apostles; and he will vomit hatred and blasphemy against God. Saint John designates especially three truths against which these blasphemies will be directed: His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

Thus Antichrist will blaspheme, first, the name of God, which belongs only to the Divinity and belongs to no other, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor in hell. He will no longer permit worship to be rendered to Him, as Christians do; and he will even forbid the holy Name to be pronounced. For it is in this way that the dragon will exercise his hatred and his perfidy against the Most High, to whom he once claimed to make himself equal.

Second, by the tabernacle, one understands the human nature with which the Divinity clothed itself, and to which it united itself hypostatically, continuing to be thus united in heaven and in the most holy Eucharist. Now it is against this tabernacle that Antichrist, with his followers, will vomit blasphemy; and he will cause all those to die who render worship to it, or who confess that God was made flesh, and that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, is the Messiah.

Third, and them that dwell in heaven - that is, the Apostles and the martyrs who suffered for the Name of Jesus while announcing Him to the world; likewise all Christians, and especially the doctors and preachers who will then live in the Church militant, which is often designated by heaven in Scripture. In a word, the beast will blaspheme against all those who will resist his perfidy and his power. These will be delivered over to the nations by Antichrist and by his followers, as Jesus Christ foretold in Saint Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall put you to death; and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake."

VERSE 7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. This is understood first of Enoch and Elijah, as was explained in chapter 11. Next, it is understood of all those who will resist Antichrist, his false prophets, and his false apostles. Finally, these words apply to all those who will preach and confess the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. It is especially in those times that these words of Saint Paul may once again be applied: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."

But this victory of the beast which will rise from the abyss against the saints - that is, against just, pious, and God-fearing men - will only be passing and limited to this mortal life. It will consist, first, in the most refined prodigies and impostures, and in the applause given to the doctrine and great wisdom of Antichrist, which the Jews and all nations will believe unanimously. Men will prefer this doctrine to the one which Enoch and Elijah, with all the saints, will preach to them with one accord. Second, this victory will consist in the power and sinews of war; in the immense extent of the empire of Antichrist; and also in the impiety and perfidy of the nations and of the Jews, who will furnish all the occasions and all the necessary help to have the faithful immolated like sheep. For then, no one will be able to confess and preach the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, with impunity.

And power was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. These words again indicate the power of this reign. This power will be such that there has never been its like since the beginning of the world. For all tribes, all nations, all tongues, and all peoples

will be subject to Antichrist. From this one understands what the desolation of those days will be.

The tribes are the remnants of the Jews, who will all agree and understand one another in order to gather themselves together from all the corners of the world, where they had been dispersed for eighteen centuries, and will fly, so to speak, toward the son of perdition, from whom they will receive power, and whom they will recognise as the Messiah. They will rage with inexplicable fury against those who confess and preach the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ as being the true Messiah. For their fury, perfidy, and power will have been bound until the time of Antichrist. This is why Jesus Christ says expressly in Saint John 5:43: "I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."

By the peoples are designated the Christians who will defect in very great part, with the exception only of the elect, who will be few in number in proportion to the mass of these peoples. For almost all men will separate themselves from God their Creator, and from Jesus their infinitely lovable Redeemer, in order to give themselves over to the idolatry of the beast. This is what the Saviour Himself foretells in Luke 18:8: "But when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?"

By every tongue, the prophet makes us understand that in those sad days there will be no nation, and no tongue under the sun, which will not consent to adore the beast and adhere to the son of perdition, thus abandoning God their infinitely perfect Creator and their lovable Redeemer. O frightful ingratitude, which no tears could sufficiently deplore! By every nation, it is given to us to understand that, just as from the beginning of the world and from the origin of the Church of Christ, the Eastern and Northern nations never preserved the faith for long, and continually made war among themselves, as history demonstrates, so also, and especially toward the end of times, all these nations will league themselves with Antichrist, and will be animated by his spirit and his fury in order to exterminate Christendom, so easily will they let themselves be seduced by the false miracles and prodigious lies of the beast.

VERSE 8. And all that dwell upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world. This verse confirms that all the reprobate will render the worship of adoration to the beast, and will separate themselves from God their Creator and from Christ. Those whose names are written in the book of life are the elect. And the book of life is the foreknowledge of God, the searcher of hearts: that foreknowledge by which God has disposed His kingdom from all eternity, and has willed to give to each one according to his works. This is why the Apostle Saint Paul says in Romans 8:30: "Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he predestinated, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This book of life, according to our understanding, is like the catalogue of a teacher who records all the progress of his students in knowledge and in virtue, and who gives a public reading of it at the end of the school year. Then each one of those who are worthy rises higher, or receives prizes and praises. Now it is in the same way that God will proceed at the end of the world in the universal judgment. For then it will be demonstrated that He does injustice to no one, but rewards each one according to his works: the good will obtain paradise as reward, and the wicked will have hell as punishment; for their works follow them, according to the words of the Apocalypse itself, chapter 14, verse 13. One may also draw a comparison from a king who has defeated his enemies and won over them a decisive victory; afterward he distributes rewards to the citizens and soldiers who behaved well in danger, and he punishes or humiliates those who showed themselves cowardly or traitorous toward

the fatherland.

The Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. These words contain the cause of the death of Jesus and of His immolation upon the Cross. And this cause is the sins of the human race, sins committed from the creation of the world, and for the expiation of which Jesus Christ died upon the Cross, in order to reconcile all men with God His Father. This is what Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53, verse 4: "Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."

If, therefore, the Father willed that His own Son, God like Him and with Him, should be delivered into the hands of the impious and should die for our sins by a cruel and ignominious death, what have we to complain of? Must we then be so astonished if He also permits the impious and tyrants to prevail against His Church and against ourselves, since their persecutions have no other result for us than to correct us, justify us, and make us arrive more quickly at the sovereign happiness of eternal life? That is why God permits the impious to prevail in the present life, while the just and all those who show zeal for the cause of God are oppressed and fall beneath the blows of the wicked. This is what God will permit especially in the time of Antichrist toward whoever will fight for the Name of Jesus Christ, whether by arms, by taking part, for example, in the army of Christians, or by speech, or by some other means. For then the just man will succumb before the power of the beast and will be immolated.

It is to make the Church and the faithful understand well the truth of this divine permission, and to convince the whole Christian society of it, that the prophet adds: VERSES 9 AND 10. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that shall lead into captivity shall go into captivity; he that shall kill by the sword must be killed by the sword. To lead into captivity and to kill by the sword is proper to soldiers and warriors. The meaning of these words is therefore this: every king, every prince, or every Christian people who will wish to resist the beast by force of arms will succumb, will be killed, or will be led into captivity.

Since the end of the world will be very near in those times, God will permit all those holy and courageous soldiers who fight for justice and truth to be conquered and immolated as victims, in order to complete the number of the martyrs. Thus, in those days of sorrow, there will be no power and no victory to hope for, except the most beautiful of all victories: the triumph of martyrdom. For no army will be able to face that of the beast. The Jews will especially be very powerful and very numerous then; they will rage with a wholly particular fury against all those who dare to confess before all nations the Name of Jesus Christ crucified.

Thus the only victory possible for Christians in those terrible days will be to be conquered, persecuted, tormented, and put to death, while remaining faithful, constant, and firm, and while hoping, against all hope, in the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Saint John adds: Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Jesus Christ alluded to this last and astonishing desolation of Christians by an allegory when He ordered His disciples, during His Passion, to buy swords; and also when, addressing Saint Peter, He said in Matthew 26:52: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

This completes Book Six, Section I, § 2: Revelation 13:1-10.

§ 3. On the Abominable and Wicked Idolatrous Antipope, Who Will Tear Apart the Western Church and Cause the First Beast to Be Adored. Chapter 13, Verses 11-18

I. VERSE 11. And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. This beast which will rise up from the earth is a false prophet who will proclaim the son of perdition as being the Christ; and he will be, as it were, his arm, by whose help Antichrist will work astonishing things, both by signs and by the power of his arms. This is why Daniel 11:42 says: "And he shall stretch forth his hand upon the lands."

It is said that this other beast will rise up from the earth because Antichrist and his own will exercise their tyranny in the East and between the seas, whereas the false prophet will rise up, prevail, and rage upon the mainland, which is near the seas, and upon which the Roman Empire is now found, containing within itself the states of the Church. It is said that this beast will have two horns like those of the Lamb because he will be an apostate Christian, and because he will rise up secretly and fraudulently.

He will gather together the Jews, who will be everywhere very numerous in those days, and they will attach themselves unanimously to his party. He will invade the states of the Church with a great army, will occupy the pontifical see, will kill the last pope, the legitimate successor of Saint Peter, and will shed the blood of Christians, especially prelates, like water, around Jerusalem. Then the Church will be scattered into solitudes and desert places, into forests and mountains, and into the clefts of rocks, because the shepherd will have been struck and the sheep will be scattered. For it will be as it was at the time of the Passion of Our Lord - Jesus Christ alluded to this circumstance of the last desolation when He said during His Passion, Matthew 26:31: "It is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed." Then the Latin Church will be torn apart; and, with the exception of the elect, there will be a total defection from the faith.

This false prophet will proclaim the son of perdition as being the Christ. Saint John also remarks that this other beast had two horns like those of the Lamb, because of the power he will have to say and to do marvellous and astonishing things, as it is truly written concerning Jesus of Nazareth in Luke 24:19: "That he was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people." Now these two powers of Jesus Christ, to speak and to act, were like two horns, as we have said in chapter 5; and it was with these two horns that He fought and conquered the Jews and the nations.

The false prophet will therefore have a power that will seem almost similar in appearance, but false in reality; for he will hold this power not from God, but from the dragon of the abyss, and he will use it to seduce and deceive the inhabitants of the earth. This is why it is added: And he spoke as a dragon. That is, the dragon will communicate to him such wisdom and such cunning in the art of speaking and seducing men that it will be as if the dragon himself, in person, were conversing in the world.

Finally, these two horns are the Law and the Prophets. And just as the Law and the Prophets contain the most beautiful and numerous testimonies concerning the truth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified, by which the Lord Himself convinced the disciples of Emmaus that He is the Christ, the Son of God, according to Luke 24:27: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning him," so this idolater, the most wicked possible, will make use of these two testimonies, the Law and the Prophets, and will place them, so to speak, upon his head like two horns, with which he will fight through himself and through his own.

He will demonstrate by false but captious proofs that the Christ has come only in those days, and not before. "The Christ," he will say, "is the redeemer of the Jewish nation, the God of the nations; the Christ is the king of Jerusalem." And he will confirm these assertions by such prodigies that the great majority of Christians will be seduced by this scandal; and almost all, except the elect, who will be few in number compared with the mass, will defect and deny the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified. But before this, the principal pastors of souls will have been taken away from their flocks by persecution and martyrdom, according to Daniel 11:32 and following.

VERSE 12. And he exercised all the power of the first beast in his presence. That is, this beast will have all the power of darkness, like the son of perdition. It is by means of this power that he will work prodigies and seduce all nations; and because of this, men will believe that Antichrist is the Christ recently come into the world. For this false prophet will be animated by the same spirit as the son of perdition, and will be subject to him. He will sustain his honour and glory against everything and everyone, with the greatest zeal. Hence these words: And he exercised all the power of the first beast in his presence - these words indeed signify the honour and glorification which one man procures for another man by working wonders, in order to exalt his authority before the world.

From this follows: And he caused the earth and them that dwell therein to adore the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. Thus this apostate will cause the earth and those who dwell upon it to adore the first beast: first, by submitting many countries to his domination by force of arms; second, by persuasion, by inducing men to render true worship of adoration to the king of Jerusalem as being the true God and the expected Messiah. Now, how will he succeed in making so many peoples and nations, and even Christians themselves, fall into such madness and such a crime? Here is how:

VERSE 13. And he did great signs, so that he made fire come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men. VERSE 14. And he seduced them that dwell on the earth, by the signs which it was given him to do in the presence of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by the sword, and lived. VERSE 15. And it was given him to give life to the image of the beast, and that the image of the beast should speak, and that whosoever would not adore the image of the beast should be slain.

All these things will be fulfilled literally. Truly frightful will be all the prodigies that God will permit at that time, in punishment for the sins of men and for the trial of His elect. Moreover, this apostate will work these wonders largely by the occult power of the demon. For the demon will then be more powerful than he has ever been since the beginning of the world. This is why he will also succeed in seducing many Christians.

As for this image of the beast, this is what it will be: the continual sacrifice will be suppressed throughout the whole earth. All consecrated hosts will be searched for with great care, in order to trample them underfoot, throw them into the fire, or make them undergo other still more scandalous outrages. And the principal authors of these scandals will especially be the Jews, who will prevail everywhere. They will destroy the altars; they will deliver the priestly vestments and the ornaments of the churches to the flames.

The relics of the saints will also be trampled underfoot; the precious vessels will be gathered together and destined to become the image of the beast, that is, of Antichrist, king of Jerusalem. The demon will dwell in these altars erected in his honour and for his worship. And these images will speak and give signs as though they were alive. Such will be the abomination of desolation of which Jesus Christ speaks in Matthew 24:15: "When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet," etc.

In those days, Christians will be searched for and dragged before the altars of the beast, in order to make them adore it, and to make them recognise by this act that Antichrist is the Christ; that he is God coming to visit his people, to gather them from their dispersion among the nations; and that he has come to deliver the Jews from the yoke and servitude of Christians. All those who refuse to adore him will be tormented and put to death by the most refined and horrible tortures. For the beast will have the upper hand everywhere. The power of his arms will be such that there will remain no hope of safety for Christians, and no other victory to expect, except the tortures and death of martyrdom.

A faint image of this persecution is found in that of King Antiochus, in 1 Maccabees 1, who was himself a true type of Antichrist; and also in the tyranny of Diocletian. But Antichrist will far surpass them. For then the Church will be scattered like a book torn into a thousand pieces and thrown into the fire. Read the first book of Maccabees, chapter 1, and you will have a vivid image of those last days. Recall also the times of Diocletian and Maximian, when they began to put into execution their plan of exterminating the whole of Christendom. But be well persuaded that in all this, you will find only the shadow or figure of what will happen under the reign of Antichrist. Hence this passage of Matthew 24:21: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be."

This persecution will differ especially from the preceding ones because it will be the cruellest and the most extensive, and because in it there will take place an incredible seduction of men by prodigies capable of deceiving even the elect, if that were possible. Moreover, it will surpass all the preceding persecutions by the defection of almost the whole universe; and this will happen because of the most refined, the longest, and the most painful tortures that can be imagined. Men will be terrified by them; and it will be in order to avoid them that they will sacrifice their souls by adoring the beast. This is why there will be few men who will persist in confessing the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. Hence these words of the impious themselves, which Saint John prophesied: "Who is like to the beast, and who shall be able to fight with him?"

VERSE 16. And he shall make all, both small and great, rich and poor, free men and bondmen, to have the character of the beast in their right hand and on their foreheads. VERSE 17. And that no man might buy or sell, but he that hath the character, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. VERSE 18. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred sixty-six.

These words contain, first, the torment of hunger, by which Christians will see themselves condemned to die. For they will not be able to buy or find the food necessary for life, unless they consent to adore the idol or image of the beast. And since hunger is a torment all the more cruel because it kills its victim more slowly, this means will be one of the most effective of all those which Antichrist and his followers will use to force men to adore the idol of abomination. Second, these words also indicate the cessation of all traffic and commerce for those who refuse to perform this act of idolatry. And this means can also be counted among the most powerful upon the heart and will of man, as daily experience clearly demonstrates to us, especially in the middle class. For there is nothing that men do not attempt or sacrifice in order to make their trade and commerce prosper. One sees, therefore, how many men this means will draw into defection and idolatry.

As for the character of the beast, this is what it will be: kings and princes, on the occasion and in remembrance of their birth, their ascension to the throne, or some other remarkable event, have gold, silver, or bronze medals struck, and have their name, the years of their reign, and the insignia of their royalty engraved upon them. Now Antichrist will do something

similar, but in a still more cruel manner; for all those who adhere to his doctrine will have to bear his character: men of the higher class on the right hand, and those of the people on the forehead. This character will be imprinted upon the skin by means of tattooing, almost as one sees on the arms of certain hired soldiers.

And whoever presents himself, willingly or by force, to offer incense to the idol of the beast, will immediately have to undergo this operation and receive, on the hand or on the forehead, according to his condition, the impression of the figure of the idol. From then on, it will be enough for him to show it in order to enjoy complete liberty to sell, to buy, to travel, to attend to his affairs, and so forth. Whereas those who do not bear this sign will not dare to appear in public, nor even to occupy themselves with the things most necessary for life. For every man who does not bear this sign, if he is discovered, will be seized, mistreated, and dragged before the idol; and if he refuses to adore it, he will undergo a horrible martyrdom.

This will certainly be a well-laid snare. And so that it may not fail to have its effect, since everything will be subject to the power of the beast, altars will be erected everywhere: in seaports, in cities, in public or commercial squares, along the roads, and so forth. These altars will be guarded by armed force, so that all those who appear in public to sell, to buy, or for any other affair whatever, and who are recognised as not having the character of the beast, will immediately be led by force before the nearest altar. And if they do not consent to burn incense and receive the character of the beast, they will be mutilated and devoured by this fierce beast.

Now the heroism of true Christians in those times of trial and of the greatest desolation that can be imagined will be to die for the faith and for the love of Jesus. Oh, how terrible that martyrdom will be, but also how glorious! With what interest the saints of heaven will contemplate that admirable and heroic struggle of their brothers, in which the patience of the victim will contend with the ferocity of the beast! And when the blood of testimony shall have caused a perfume of pleasing odour to rise from earth to heaven, a new struggle will be, as it were, engaged between the witnesses of the earth and the witnesses of heaven. For while the saints in heaven will crown the triumph of the victim over the cruelty of the beast, the impious, on their side, will proclaim upon earth, by infernal vociferations, the triumph of the beast over the life of the victim.

O love of Jesus, how powerful You are! For You, the Christian passes from life to death; and by You, he passes from death to life. O what a sweet moment for the Bridegroom, contemplating from the height of heaven His beloved bride in her constancy, perseverance, love, and victory upon earth! It is then that He will address to her these tender words from the Canticle of Canticles 4:11: "Thy lips, O my spouse, are as a dropping honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is as the smell of frankincense." "Thy plants are a paradise of delights." "The fountain of thy gardens is a well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Lebanon." "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind; blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow."

Saint John indicates six classes of men whom the beast will force to bear his character. They are: the small and the great, the rich and the poor, free men and slaves. Nothing in this book is written without reason, and every word contains wisdom. By the small are designated the children who will be born in that time, or who will have been born and baptised shortly before; for the son of perdition and his false prophets will abolish every baptism made in the Name of the Holy Trinity. They will take care to force all children and young people of both sexes to receive the character of the beast on the forehead, and to reject the baptism instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified.

As for newborn children, they will be prevented from being baptised, or the character of the beast will be imprinted upon their forehead; and all parents who are discovered to have procured baptism for their children will be horribly massacred. Hence this prophecy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:19: "Woe to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days." By the great are designated adults; and by the rich are designated princes, great men, and the higher class. The poor indicate the common class of the people in general. Free men are the citizens of the republics of that time. Finally, by slaves one understands hired workers, domestic servants, servant women, and, in general, wage-servants and day-labourers. All these wretches will accept the character and will adore the image of the beast.

And no man shall be able to buy or sell, but he that hath the character, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. All these different designations refer to the same object or to the same name, and here is how: this character of the beast will be, as has been said, a certain sign which the followers of Antichrist will bear on the hand or on the forehead. Now this sign is called a character because it will be imprinted on the skin and will contain certain letters of a certain language. Moreover, this sign is called a name because these letters will in fact express and form a name; and this name will be that of the beast. Finally, this sign will designate a number because the letters of this sign, taken separately, will signify or represent numbers; and the numbers of each letter added together make 666, which is the number of a man, the number of his name, and the number of the years in which he will be born.

Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred sixty-six. Here Saint John provokes the human mind to resolve this enigma. One must first know that the book of the Apocalypse was written by Saint John in the Greek language. Now that language does not possess a word expressing this number 666; but the Greek name Antemos, which is composed of two words, means, first, contrary; and second, this word contains, by the letters of which it is formed, the number 666. For it is among the Greeks as among the Latins: certain letters signify a certain number. And this is why the Latin interpreter of the Apocalypse did not express this name according to its meaning; rather, he interpreted its number, and instead of the name he put: And his number is six hundred sixty-six.

This Greek name Antemos is an adjective, and is given to the son of perdition by antonomasia; that is, it designates the quality or manner of being of Antichrist, who will indeed be contrary to Christ and to everything that belongs properly to God. This is why Our Saviour gave him the name Antichrist, a name composed of anti, which signifies in Latin contra, and in English "against," and of Christos, which signifies Messiah, that is, the promised One, the Saviour of the world. Thus this name Antemos will not be his proper name. But the name which he will usurp will be that of Christ; and it is before this name that every knee will bow before him upon earth.

Hence these warnings, more than once repeated, which the Saviour addresses to us, Matthew 24:23: "Then if any man shall say to you: Lo, here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Behold I have told it to you beforehand. If therefore they shall say to you: Behold, he is in the desert, go ye not out; Behold, he is in the closets, believe it not." These words are spoken in an enigmatic sense. This desert and this most hidden place of the house can be understood of Jerusalem and Judea, which is a desert that the absence of the sun of faith has made arid; and Jerusalem is truly the most hidden place and the centre of the house of Israel. For when Saint John the Baptist preached penance in Judea, it is said that his voice was the voice of one crying in the desert.

Therefore, this character of the beast will consist in certain Hebrew letters which will be imprinted on the right hand or on the forehead of men, and which will signify in Greek and in Latin Christus, the Christ. Now, since he will not be the Christ, but Antichrist - that is, contrary to Christ in all things - this is why Saint John said in Greek that his name is the number of a man, and his number is Antemos; that is, contrary to Christ, or Antichrist, as Our Saviour calls him. This is why the Latin interpreter contented himself with expressing this name by the number which these Greek letters, Antemos, added together, constitute; that is, six hundred sixty-six. Indeed, the Greek letter alpha equals 1, nu equals 50, tau equals 300, epsilon equals 5, mu equals 40, omicron equals 70, and sigma equals 200; and all these numbers added together make 666.

Now this number 666 is a number of months, making fifty-five and a half years; and it is the number of the years of the beast, that is, of the epoch of his birth and the duration of his life. For in the middle of the year of Jesus Christ 1855, in the nineteenth century, Antichrist will be born, and he will live fifty-five and a half years. And it is during the last three years of his life and during the last six months - that is, during three and a half years - that he will rage with the greatest fury against Christendom; and that, in agreement with his false prophet the antipope, he will exterminate the Church, scatter the flock of Jesus Christ, and conquer and kill all the faithful by the power given to him for forty-two months over every tribe, every people, every tongue, and every nation, to make war against the saints of God and to conquer them during the time when he will be seated in the fullness of his reign.

Thus, in the year 1911, the days of the beast - that is, of Muhammadism - will be accomplished; and the son of perdition will be killed in the middle of the fifty-sixth year of his life by the breath, that is, by the word which will come out of the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth crucified. Then the remnants of the Jews will be converted and will say: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Afterward the firmament will be dissolved and broken with great violence; and Christ will come to judge the living and the dead. Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour no one knoweth, not even the angels of heaven, but the Father alone," says Jesus Christ.

This completes Book Six, Section I, § 3: Revelation 13:11-18, and with it Chapter Thirteen in its entirety.

CHAPTER 14

The Lamb on Mount Zion and the Harvest of the Earth

Revelation 14:1–20

§ 1. On the Glory and Triumph of the Holy Martyrs Who Will Die Intrepidly in the Last Persecution for the Name of Jesus and of His Father. Chapter 14, Verses 1-5

I. VERSE 1. And I saw: and behold the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. This Lamb is Christ, who is here called the Lamb because, just as He was immolated in His Passion like a lamb, and was abandoned by everyone at His death, so, in the last persecution, He will be the Lamb in His martyrs, who will be killed like sheep, and who will be abandoned by men and even, for that circumstance, by God; for they will be without help and without a deliverer.

In those days of desolation, Jesus Christ will therefore truly show Himself as a lamb, permitting the enemies of the Cross to rage against His saints, to conquer them for this world, and to kill them. It is said that this Lamb was standing because He will be the witness of their torments, and because He will strengthen them inwardly in their souls, lest they grow weak. Thus it is reported of Saint Stephen, Acts 7:55, that in his martyrdom he was "filled with the Holy Ghost," and that, looking toward heaven, "he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of His Father."

And I saw: and behold the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion. By Mount Sion is designated the Church of Christ, over which He always presides as universal Head. And it is especially then that He will stand like a general-in-chief, to direct His Church and to encourage His soldiers toward spiritual victory. For such is the victory of the martyr: to suffer, to die, and to be exterminated in his body, in order to conquer in his soul.

And with him a hundred forty-four thousand. This number must be taken in an indeterminate sense, and it designates the universality of the martyrs who will be immolated in very great multitude, and who will persevere in those times in the confession of the Name of Jesus and of His Father. This is why the text adds: Having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads - these words indicate that these hundred forty-four thousand faithful, a very great multitude of Christians who nevertheless will be the minority in comparison with the mass of those who will defect, will openly and publicly confess Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified, and His Father, true God with Him; and they will seal their testimony with their blood, dying devoured by the beast.

It is said that these hundred forty-four thousand martyrs were standing with the Lamb, Jesus Christ, in order to fight with Him against the beast. These martyrs will be the doctors, preachers, and pastors of souls; for it will be especially the priests of the various hierarchical orders of the Church militant who will present themselves openly to resist Antichrist and his false prophets, and to protect the Christian people against defection. It is of these martyrs that Daniel speaks in his prophecy, Daniel 11:33 and following: "And the wise among the people shall instruct many, and they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity,

and by ruin in those times. And when they shall have fallen, they shall be helped with a little help; and many shall be joined to them deceitfully. And some of the wise shall fall, that they may be renewed, and may be chosen, and may be purified and made white, until the appointed time."

The others, on the contrary, who will have been terrified by the horror of the punishments and by the frightful tyranny of the beast, will flee from his presence and will hide themselves in desert places, in solitudes, in the gorges of mountains, and in the clefts of rocks. It is also said, in order to distinguish the intrepid Christians from those who will defect, and as though to signal the special glory of the former, that they had His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And further on it is said that they sang a new canticle, and that no one could sing this canticle except these hundred forty-four thousand.

Finally, the prophet cites this number, one hundred forty-four thousand, because it is precisely the number of the twelve thousand marked from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, of whom chapter 7 speaks; and also to signify the universality and the great multitude of victims who will be immolated in the different hierarchical orders of the Church, for these orders are like tribes, of which the twelve tribes of Israel were the figure.

II. VERSE 2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of many harpers playing on their harps. VERSE 3. And they sang as it were a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the ancients; and no man could sing the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. VERSE 4. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb wherever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. VERSE 5. And in their mouth there was found no lie, for they are without spot before the throne of God.

All these words apply much better to the Church militant than to the Church triumphant. They express the virtues, the glory, and the courage of those faithful servants of God of whom we have just spoken. First, they express their intrepid preaching and the confession of the Name of Jesus and of His Father - this is why it is said above: Having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder. This voice is that of the preachers and confessors of the Name of Jesus Christ and of His Father in the days of the beast. This voice will be like the sound of many waters because, just as great waters make a great noise which attracts the attention of men and inspires them with fear, and just as waters also wash and are a very active solvent, so the preaching of these saints will act strongly upon the hearts of Christian peoples, whom it will instruct and preserve in the orthodox faith and in the confession of the Name of Jesus and of His Father.

It is further said that this voice was like the sound of great thunder. Four things are distinguished in thunder: the flash of lightning; the sound of the storm; the effects of the thunderbolt; and the fear and terror which men feel because of it. Such will be the effects of the preaching of the ministers of Jesus Christ in the last days: it will shine by great miracles against Antichrist and his false prophets; it will be strong and powerful like the roaring of a lion; it will destroy and annihilate the illusion of the wonders of the beast; and it will inspire in a multitude of men a great fear of God and of the evils to come.

Thus the preaching of these saints will confirm the peoples in the faith, and will encourage them to confess the Name of Jesus and of His Father rather than to adore the beast and receive his character. Now, since the beast will not be able to conquer the martyrs and drag their souls into the abyss, it will avenge itself upon their bodies with the greatest fury, and

will immolate them as the Hebrews immolated sheep, oxen, and other animals when they solemnised the Passover in memory of their departure from Egypt. This is why it was said in the preceding chapter: "She received power to make war against the saints and to overcome them."

Second, the words of verse 3 express the perfect agreement of the minds and hearts of these ministers of the Lord, and also the exact conformity of their works with their doctrine. Thus their preaching will produce a sweet harmony, whose sound will touch and powerfully impress the hearts of the peoples, and will produce a pleasing harmony before God and the Lamb. Hence these words of the prophet: The voice which I heard was as the voice of many harpers playing on their harps.

These words express with great beauty the truth of the doctrine, the purity of morals, and the perfection of charity of those saints who will preach in those times in the Name of Jesus Christ and of His Father, against the abominations and errors of the beast. For just as many harpists, when their instruments are in perfect accord and when they perform pieces of harmony together, produce an admirable effect and exercise a great power over the minds and hearts of men, so the preaching of the word of God, confirmed and adorned by the holy examples and by the great purity of morals of the last apostles, will produce a powerful and effective impression upon the heart and mind of sinners. For good works are the soul of that heavenly instrument of the Word of God.

The prophet therefore employs this comparison, as beautiful as it is touching, to praise these saints and soldiers of Jesus Christ who will dare, in the midst of danger and in the dispersion of their brothers, to use their harps in order to restrain them, gather them, and bring them back to the combat. And no one other than these hundred forty-four thousand who are marked on the forehead with the Name of Jesus Christ and of His Father will dare to resist the fury of the beast. All the others will flee from his presence into desert places, or will defect, receive his character, and adore his image.

Third, and they sang as it were a new canticle. These words designate the confession of Jesus Christ and of His Father, and also virginal chastity or celibacy: two merits that will be so rare among the men of that age, especially because of the tyranny of the beast, that they will appear like a new canticle. For then faith will have entirely disappeared; all flesh will have corrupted its ways; men will wallow in the pleasures of the flesh and in the concupiscence of women. Many ecclesiastics themselves will trample underfoot their most sacred duties, become apostates in order to become husbands, and the face of Christendom will be livid and horrible, as it will never have been until then.

Now, since faith and celibacy flourished in preceding centuries, and since they were already well known in former times, this is why the Apostle does not say absolutely that these two virtues will be new canticles, but as it were, or almost, new. The word sing in this case contains a metaphor, and signifies: to preach publicly, to announce, to confess the truth with joy, and with great liberty and great independence of mind and character; to place all one's glory in doing so, even showing a certain exaltation of spirit. For then the Church militant, in the midst of her desolation, abandonment, dispersion, and poverty, will not be deprived of every consolation. And the consolation of the Church in that time will be, for Catholic hearts who know how to appreciate it, to see so many intrepid soldiers, united by the strongest bonds of charity in Jesus Christ, make their glory, their hope, their love, and their happiness consist in shedding their blood for the Name of the Lord.

Fourth, and they sang as it were a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the ancients. These words must be understood both of the Church militant and of the Church triumphant, because of the great joy which the triumph of these intrepid and

constant athletes of the faith will procure for both Churches. For to sing before someone is to manifest and procure joy for him. In those days of terror, the persecution will rage not only against the faith of Christians, but also against virginity or priestly celibacy; for the beast, who will be sunk in the dregs of vice and in the concupiscence of women, will have virginity in aversion (Daniel 11:37).

Fifth, and no man could sing the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These words contain a secret of the eternal foreknowledge of God, a secret which was nevertheless revealed to Saint John, in order to inform us in advance of the small number of those who will resist so hard a trial. And God revealed this mystery to us lest Christians should take scandal from it, and lest it become another stumbling block added to all the others, to discourage the faithful. On the contrary, the verification of this prophecy should be, for upright hearts and true soldiers of Jesus Christ, one more motive to strengthen their faith and constancy.

Oh, how small is this number in proportion to the mass of men who people the universe! Ah, it is because, in that time of abomination, there will be a thousand wicked men for ten just ones, and a hundred impious men against one saint. These words demonstrate only too clearly the immense difficulty and incalculable dangers that there will then be for the salvation of souls. The cruelty of the punishments, the corruption, the malice of men, the incredible prodigies of the false prophets, the power of Antichrist over the whole world, the silence of God, who will appear to close His eyes upon that horrible scene, the removal and disappearance of the best men by the violence of torments - all these will be causes of that universal defection. O God, how deep are Your judgments, and how impenetrable are Your ways!

These words, placed in the imperfect, do not contain an absolute impossibility, but a conditional one. It will be absolute indeed in relation to the foreknowledge of God; but it will be conditional in relation to the human will. For those who wish to do so will be able to resist, aided by the grace of God. But, O misfortune! 1 Corinthians 9:24: "Know you not that they that run in the race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." This is our example - we priests of the Lord, and you all Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ. Our life must be a continual combat.

Let us therefore prepare ourselves in this way for the great work of the conversion of the world which is about to begin, and afterward for the struggle which threatens the Church so closely. And no man could sing this canticle, for then the flesh and concupiscence will prevail over the spirit; women will pluck the fruits of the tree of the Church, that is, the hearts of many priests whom Jesus Christ alone should possess. There will then be a scarcity of courageous men; and the earth will abound in selfish men, trees without fruit, Christians without faith, and corrupt morals.

Sixth, who were purchased from the earth. These words indicate the elect, the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, who were bought from this world at the price of the Blood of the Lamb, and who will be preserved and kept for eternal life by their own blood, which they will generously shed for the faith and the confession of the Name of Jesus.

VERSE 4. Seventh, these are they who were not defiled with women - that is, they will faithfully keep priestly celibacy, which will be a rare merit and, as it were, a speciality in those days. Eighth, for they are virgins. These good and holy priests are called virgins

because they will not be soiled by any vice of the flesh, and because they will never grow weak so as to accept the character of the beast and adore his image, but will preserve themselves pure from every commerce and every relation with it, as virgins and honest women know how to preserve themselves from the insults of an impudent man. Finally, they will remain faithful to God and to the Lamb by their perseverance in the Catholic faith.

In those evil days, it is true, many will fall into apostasy and adore the image of the beast through human weakness, because of the cruelty and duration of the torments, and because of the terror which the power of the beast will inspire in them. But afterward they will recognise their fault; they will courageously rise again from their fall, aided by the grace of God; they will confess their sins, and they will be confirmed and strengthened again in the true faith.

Ninth, these follow the Lamb wherever he goeth. Saint John expresses by these words the perfect obedience of these saints, who will always be disposed to undertake everything, even what is most difficult and most repugnant to nature; and who, moved by the spirit of Jesus Christ, will expose themselves, if necessary, to all torments, to prison, and even to death itself, and will confess with joy that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These words also signify a perfect imitation of the Lamb, as far as human strength, aided by the grace of God, permits. They express conformity of life in the just with the life of Jesus, their model and their head.

For they will be poor, meek, humble, afflicted, persecuted, rejected by men, and deprived of their resources and possessions, according to these words of the Apostle, Hebrews 11:35: "Some were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth." Now such are the torments reserved for these saints, who will nevertheless show themselves meek as the lamb that is led to the slaughter. They will endure everything with resignation, thinking of the result of their martyrdom, and always keeping before their eyes the living image of their infinitely lovable and perfectly pure Master, Jesus Christ.

Tenth, these were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. By these words, Saint John wishes to show us that these holy martyrs will belong to the sacred orders, and that these hundred forty-four thousand will be taken from among the doctors, preachers, pastors of souls, from among priests in general, and that they will be massacred especially out of hatred for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which the beast will strive to suppress. In this text of Saint John, there is no mention of the Christian people; but there is no doubt that a very great multitude of lay faithful will also fight courageously for the faith, animated as they will be by the word and example of their pastors. Thus Christians in general will be immolated like sheep throughout the whole earth, and will suffer martyrdom with the help of God. This assertion is, moreover, founded upon verses 9, 13, and 14 of chapter 7.

They were purchased from among men. That is, these holy priests will be chosen and separated from other men, because they will keep celibacy, because they will not involve themselves in the affairs of the age, and because they will show themselves truly as firstfruits consecrated to God and to the Lamb.

VERSE 5. Eleventh, and in their mouth there was found no lie. Here Saint John expresses the love of truth and simplicity of heart which will be the ornament of these saints. They will not allow themselves to be seduced by the impostures of the false prophets, being protected by the shield of truth and by the simplicity of their hearts. This shield will indeed be the best

defence that can guard them under the reign of lies of those last times; for it is in the simplicity of their heart that these saints will close their ears to every seduction. They will wish to believe nothing except in Jesus Christ and in the Catholic faith, which contains the truth always ancient and always new. It is this same shield which the children of Israel used in the persecution of Antiochus, when they said, 1 Maccabees 2:37: "Let us all die in our simplicity, and heaven and earth shall be witnesses that you put us to death unjustly."

And in their mouth there was found no lie, because they will preach and teach to the world the whole truth, without mixture of errors, without deceiving their brothers by hypocrisy, lies, duplicity, deceit, seduction, and the false politics with which the world will then be infected and covered, as the earth is covered with locusts in the heat of summer. These saints will walk in uprightness and simplicity before God and men.

This is why Saint John finally adds: twelfth, for they are without spot before the throne of God. That is, they will preserve themselves pure from every stain in the midst of the most corrupt age; for that age will be the dregs of the corruption of all ages. Everything abominable and criminal that there will have been in the world from its origin will be reproduced and carried to its height under the reign of Antichrist. It is therefore with reason that Saint John praises these saints as enjoying a particular and exceptional prerogative, because they are pure before the throne of God.

This completes Book Six, Section II, § 1: Revelation 14:1-5.

§ 2. On the Voice of the Three Angels, and the Voice Coming from Heaven. Chapter 14, Verses 6-13

VERSE 6. And I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the eternal Gospel, to preach it to them that sit upon the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people. VERSE 7. Saying with a loud voice: Fear the Lord, and give him honour, because the hour of his judgment is come; and adore ye him that made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters.

The first angel is Jesus Christ, who announced to the world the will of His Father, and who is called the Angel of the Testament in Malachi 3:1. The other angel after Jesus Christ is the body of the Apostles, whom He sent throughout the world to preach the Gospel there. This second angel is called another angel because he immediately succeeded Jesus Christ in the preaching of the word of God. Thus, this angel whom Saint John saw flying through the midst of heaven, having the eternal Gospel, is the apostolic body, the priesthood - or rather Saint Michael, representing the moral person of the Church.

Now, toward the end of times, according to the decree of the will of Christ her founder, the priesthood will flourish anew and will be adorned like the bird when it renews its feathers. And when the wings of its liberty shall have grown, this bird will fly through the midst of heaven. By heaven one here understands the Church militant, of which the priesthood will become the ornament and joy by its holy conduct and by its apostolic life, metaphorically represented by the flight of the angel.

As for the eternal Gospel which Saint John saw in his hand, here is its interpretation: this eternal Gospel is the divine oracles which God revealed to His Apostles through His Son Jesus Christ, and which they communicated to the world by preaching the Gospel throughout the whole earth. It is said that this second angel carried the eternal Gospel because the Gospel was indeed entrusted into the hands of the Apostles, to whom it belongs to announce the eternal word of God. Hence this passage: to preach it to them that sit upon the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people - by those who sit upon the earth are

designated kings, princes, rulers, nobles, and, in general, all those who dominate upon the earth, over nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples.

Saying with a loud voice - that is, this other angel whom Saint John saw flying through the midst of heaven will preach with zeal, ardour, and efficacy; and the finger of God will be manifested in the preaching of the Apostles whom this angel represents. And they will say to those who govern the earth: Fear the Lord, and give him honour, because the hour of his judgment is come; and adore ye him that made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters. This preaching is emphatic, and it implicitly represents the things most necessary for salvation, namely: to fear the Lord, to give Him glory, and to adore Him.

Saint John adds two effective motives which these Apostles will use in order to persuade by their preaching. The first motive is that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, of the sea and of the fountains - these four things contain within themselves all creatures, and are cited here as though to represent all the wonders of the Creator. The second motive is judgment; for the hour of judgment has been fixed in order to render to each one according to his works, and this hour is always approaching; indeed, in relation to eternity, it is as though present. Now, since these two motives have always been very effective in keeping men in their duty toward God, so, toward the end of times, the consideration of these truths will be very useful, and even necessary, to dispose men to resist the beast.

Finally, the preaching of this angel must take place at two different epochs. The first is when the nations, the peoples, men of various tongues, and several kings will return into the bosom of the Catholic Church in the sixth age, as we have seen in chapter 10, verse 11. For it is through the priesthood that this great work will be accomplished: the general conversion of unbelievers and of sinners who will return to penance. Then the voice of the priesthood, or of the angel who represents it, will truly be a strong and very effective voice. The conversion of sinners will take place before the beast - that is, the Turkish Empire - receives its mortal wound, and before the fall of the first Babylon, which is the kingdom of the nations, as we shall see below.

The second epoch of the preaching of this angel is that of the last times, in which the charity of many will grow cold, faith will disappear, and the son of perdition will be manifested. Then this angel - the priesthood - will lift up its voice with strength in the Name of Jesus Christ and of His Father. It will preach intrepidly throughout the whole earth and will say to all men who inhabit it: Fear the Lord, and give him honour, because the hour of his judgment is come; and adore ye him that made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters. For in that time, says Daniel 11:33: "The wise among the people shall instruct many." It is then that the last Apostles will go throughout the earth, carrying the eternal Gospel, and working wonders by the virtue of the Almighty, and not by the power of this world. This second epoch will be that of the end of times, when Babylon, which is the reign of this world, will fall and will be consumed by fire, as we shall see further on.

II. VERSE 8. And another angel followed, saying: Fallen, fallen is that great Babylon, which made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Babylon and Babel are synonymous, and signify confusion and mixture. Babylon contains in this book of the Apocalypse a great mystery, which Saint John describes under its figure and enigma. It has two meanings.

First, it represents the special kingdom of the nations, a kingdom which was always the enemy and adversary of the house of Israel in the Old Testament, just as it was and will always be opposed to Christendom in the New, until the consummation of the ages. Now the present reign of the nations is the empire of the Turks, founded by Muhammad, and of which Antichrist will be the last and most powerful sovereign. It is with reason and truth that Saint

John gives it the name Babylon, since this empire is formed and mixed from various peoples and different nations, and since its sect is a fusion of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, teaching the strangest dogmas - or rather errors - as one may convince oneself by the Qur'an. This empire is also called Babylon because Chaldean Babylon was a very powerful and very considerable city, which one could regard as the metropolis of the reign of the nations.

Second, Babylon also represents the world with all its delights and all its pleasures, as being the aggregate of all the wicked united together against the good, under the leadership of their chief Lucifer. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ pointed out this world to His Apostles in John 15:18-19. There are two cities, which are the two capitals of the two kingdoms that divide the earth. One is Sion, or Jerusalem, whose king is Jesus Christ, and whose citizens are all the just or the elect, from Abel until the last one who will be born. Now all the inhabitants of this city constitute the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The other city is Babylon, whose king is Lucifer, and whose inhabitants are the wicked and the reprobate, from Cain until the son of perdition. All these constitute the kingdom of the nations, that is, of all the impious. And this kingdom is also called the world, whose reign and ruin Saint John describes below under the figure of Babylon.

It is in both of these two senses that one must understand, even literally, this Babylon cited in the text. And this is why her ruin is repeated twice: Fallen, fallen is great Babylon. The first fall applies to the ruin of the Turkish Empire; and the second must be referred to the ruin of the kingdom of this world, as we shall see below.

And another angel followed, saying, etc. This angel also represents two persons: the one who announces the fall of Babylon to Saint John, and the person represented. First, this angel is Saint Michael, who announced above the fall of the Turkish Empire and the final ruin of this world. Second, this angel at the same time represents the powerful Monarch under whose empire the reign of the nations will be destroyed, and the empire of the Turks will be mortally wounded. For this reason Saint Michael, representing the Church militant upon earth, congratulates this Church on the fall of the Turkish Empire and of the reign of the nations, and makes it a motive of consolation for her.

It is said that this other angel followed the first. This difference comes from the fact that the announcement of an event naturally precedes its accomplishment. Indeed, in the space of time which will separate the announcement from the event itself, God will raise up a powerful Monarch among the princes of the earth, in order to strike down the great horn of the beast - that is, the empire of Constantinople, or the empire of the East - and in order to occupy its seat.

Fallen, fallen. These words express joy and congratulation over an event long desired and awaited. He expresses himself in the past and not in the future, as though to guarantee the infallibility of the event - it is as though he said: however powerful, however vast, and however prosperous the Turkish Empire may be, it is as certain that it will fall as if it had already happened. Now it will be the same with the end of the world, so long desired by the just, and in which the wicked refuse to believe.

He repeats it for two reasons. First, to confirm the truth of this very great event, which appears all the more distant because it is awaited with greater impatience. Second, to designate two things: the ruin of the Turkish Empire and of the nations in particular, and then the universal ruin of this world, of which he speaks at great length later.

Fallen, fallen is that great Babylon. This is an emphatic manner of speaking, to express this fall and this ruin in two ways. First, the beast will fall from its seat, which is Constantinople and the empire of the East. For by this it will lose its power, the extent of its empire, the multitude of its peoples, and the pomp of its pride, and will be humbled to the point of

possessing only a small state. Second, this world, with all its pleasures, the delights of its glory, the pomp of its display, and the brilliance of its riches, will come to an end.

All the worldly who shall have forgotten God their Creator, and who shall have lived without fear of His judgments and according to their corrupt desires, will perish with it, in order afterward to be cast all together into the lake of fire. Thus will be accomplished this word of the Psalmist, Psalm 111:9: "The desire of the wicked shall perish." Then illicit loves, the pleasures of the flesh, riches, honours, principalities, pomp, vainglory, and luxury will vanish away. The fields, woods, and vineyards will no longer bear fruit. The wicked will be agitated in the torments of eternal flames, torments proportioned to the malice and number of their crimes, without any relief and without any consolation. The elect, on the contrary, will rest from their pains and temporal labours in perfect happiness, without any alteration, throughout all eternity.

Fallen is great Babylon. She is called great because of the power, extent, and strength of her kingdoms upon earth, and because of the pride with which she dominated the poor, the humble, the simple, and the just whom she oppressed, whom she despised, and whom she regarded with an eye of disdain. She is also called great because of the innumerable multitude of the wicked and the impious, and because of the number and infinite greatness of her sins.

This is why Saint John adds: which made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. This passage contains three nouns which express the enormity of her malice and wickedness. Indeed, wine intoxicates; wrath excites to rage and tyranny; and fornication expresses idolatry and every kind of infidelity committed against God and against His Christ. Thus, the wine of the wrath of her fornication is the fierce wickedness of the sect of Muhammad, which gave this wine to all nations to drink; that is, which excited them, corrupted them, seduced them, continually drove them to tyranny against Christendom, and forced them to apostatise and reject the worship of the true God, as the history of all past centuries demonstrates only too well. Let this be said in the first sense explained above.

In the second place, the wine of the wrath of her fornication is understood of the heresies, vices, pleasures, and impurities of the age, with which the nations and peoples of the earth will have become as though intoxicated, forgetting God their Creator and refusing to render Him homage by works of holiness and justice. Now the height of this fornication will take place under the reign of Antichrist, who will make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication by his frightful tyranny and seductive impostures, by forcing them to apostatise and deny their God, Jesus Christ, together with His Father.

III. VERSE 9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image, and receive his character in his forehead or in his hand, VERSE 10. He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb. VERSE 11. And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; neither have they rest day nor night, who have adored the beast and his image, and whoever receiveth the character of his name. VERSE 12. Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

This angel is the last Roman Pontiff. He is called a third angel because he will be the third after Jesus Christ, of whom he will be the immediate predecessor in His second coming, just as Saint Peter was His successor in the first. And it is also because both of these two popes alone will have borne the name Peter - for according to the prophecy of Saint Malachy, Primate of Ireland, there will have been no Pontiff of that name in the whole chain of popes, except the first and the last.

This Pontiff will govern the Church in the last and greatest tribulations, when there will gradually appear the question and horrible heresy of the alleged arrival of the Christ and Messiah whom the beast rising up from the earth will announce as being the king of Jerusalem; that is, when the son of perdition will be manifested. Then this Pope, or this third angel, will cry with a loud voice against Antichrist and his followers, against the Jews, the nations, and apostate Christians, by his apostolic definitions and by his encyclicals which he will address to all princes, all peoples, and all Christendom. He will exhort them to keep the commandments of God and faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified; and he will warn them not to let themselves be deceived by this frightful heresy: that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was crucified by the Jews, was an impostor, and that only in these days has the true Saviour and Messiah, awaited for so many centuries by the Jews and by the nations, finally appeared in the world.

For this heresy will take on gigantic proportions, and will already have been condemned by the Church before the son of perdition enters into the fullness of his reign and power. And because men will then have hard heads, and because that time will be the height and summary of all prevarication, this Pontiff will make use of the ministry of his Apostles, of whom we have spoken above, in order to protect and defend truth and justice. He will send them to confirm and bring back the peoples into obedience and into faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, and in His Father, and in the Holy Spirit.

And it is to all men that he will cry with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image, and receive his character in his forehead or in his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; neither have they rest day nor night, who have adored the beast and his image, and whoever receiveth the character of his name. All these words must be understood literally. They express the eternal damnation of all those who in those days, however evil they may be, will abandon the justice of God and faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified. Moreover, these words teach men to fear the true God and their last ends; for after the death and Passion of Jesus Christ, this fear will be the only shield of the Christian people, by which they will be able to win victory over the beast and over his false prophets.

If any man shall adore the beast... he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath. These words express the kind of eternal punishments, which are the implacable wrath of God throughout all eternity. Now this is the greatest torment that can afflict the damned. This torment is called the wine of His wrath because of the vehemence of divine justice and vengeance. Of this wine, mingled pure in the cup of His wrath - for each one will be punished according to the measure of his iniquities. The more the impious one has sinned, the more he will be tormented.

And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. These words express the first kind of punishments which the damned will endure: the torment of eternal fire. For although the torments of hell are so great and so numerous that one cannot express them, Saint John indicates and summarises them all admirably by these two strong expressions: fire and brimstone. For the fire of hell will not serve to enlighten the damned, according to Saint Matthew 8:12: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." But this fire will burn the bodies of these miserable ones throughout all eternity, and this fire will be mixed with brimstone in such a way that the brimstone will feed the fire, and the fire will develop the horrible stench of the brimstone.

The second kind of these punishments will be the eternal confusion of the wicked, expressed by these words of the text: in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb. Thus

the whole heavenly court, and the Lamb who is King Jesus Christ, will be witnesses throughout all eternity of the horrible shame and frightful confusion of sinners. For they will no longer be able to veil their filth and their abominations, since then the secret of hearts will exist no more.

The third kind of these punishments will be eternity, designated by these words: and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever. Now in the place from which smoke rises without ceasing, there is always fire; and since this smoke will rise for ever and ever, the fire that produces it will be eternal, for there is no redemption for the damned. The fourth kind is contained implicitly in the same words as above, from which one may conclude that these miserable ones will exhale, with the smoke of their torments, blasphemy, envy, jealousy, hatred against the Almighty, and will make heard the gnashing of their teeth for ever and ever.

It is with reason that this rage of sinners against heaven is compared to smoke, which can never rise high enough to reach the heavenly regions. For God, founded upon the justice of His cause, will in His turn mock the impious who despised Him upon earth. And this torment will be horrible for the wicked, who will be devoured by thirst for vengeance, without ever being able to exercise it. For their blasphemies will be vain and without effect, just as smoke that rises into the air can never reach the stars. The wicked will therefore seek in vain to avenge themselves; they will never succeed. They will wish to deliver themselves from their torments, and no one will come to their aid. They will remember the pleasures of their life, and they will be deprived of them forever. They will desire to die, and death will flee far from them. Finally, they will invoke nothingness, or will think they find it in the fire; but the fire will burn them eternally without ever destroying them, because the place they inhabit is the land of forgetfulness. O you, therefore, children of men, remember your last ends, and you will sin no more!

The fifth kind of the torments of hell is that there will be no rest day or night - that is, the damned will never be relieved in their evils by any sleep, and their pains will be continual and every instant.

Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This conclusion follows from the consideration of what precedes; that is, from the eternal torments of which the saints continually have a vivid image before their eyes. It is because of this that they endure with patience all the trials of the present life, in order to avoid the torments of hell. It is thus that, in the last persecution, true Christians, considering the destiny of the good in order to compare it with that of the wicked, will endure with courage and resignation all the torments which the beast will inflict upon them, however long and cruel they may be. And they will remain faithful in the love and faith of Jesus, braving the fury of the beast.

Whereas, on the contrary, he who shall adore the beast and his image, and who shall receive his character on his forehead or in his hand, shall be tormented with fire and brimstone for ever and ever. For God will admit no excuse based on the too great cruelty and the seductive impostures of the beast. This is why Jesus Christ takes care to inform all Christendom in advance, in order to strengthen the faithful, and to encourage them to die courageously and to bear with patience the passing torments which He will permit in order to test His elect. Jesus Christ willed that the pains of hell reserved for cowards who will deny Him by adoring the beast and his image, and by receiving his character, should be solemnly promulgated by the Sovereign Pontiff, who will cry with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image... he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, etc.

IV. VERSE 13. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying to me: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them. This voice is that of the Church militant, which will be heard in the persecution of Antichrist, to congratulate the just in advance upon their martyrdom, and at the same time to sympathise with their pains and labours in tribulations, at the most difficult hour of temptation and at the hour of the most terrible agony that it is possible to undergo.

Blessed are those who will enjoy the great benefit and wholly paternal mercy which God will grant them: to die by plague, famine, or by the wars which will precede those days so full of dangers for souls. See what was said in Book Three, chapter 7. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord - that is, blessed are those who will have died in the grace of God before the hour of this temptation, a thousand times more horrible and more dangerous than the pains and anguish of childbirth!

From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them. These words are full of consolation for those whose bodies and souls rest in the Lord. We say their bodies, for they indeed rest and sleep a sweet sleep in their tombs, awaiting their glorious resurrection, in which they will be transformed and delivered from all the labours, all the dangers, and all the pains of the present life. Blessed are the souls - that is, the spirits of the just - because their works follow them. For they are in glory, and have no longer to suffer any danger or any temptation. They are inaccessible to errors, fears, and the impostures of tyrants. No one will be able to persecute them anymore, nor to ruin them; for they will be in perfect beatitude and rest, a rest which they will enjoy before the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb for ever and ever.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. This phrase may be taken in the past and in the present. The words that compose it are filled with energy. They are a warning given to all men, and especially to those who will live in the time of Antichrist. Jesus Christ therefore tells them to remember the death of the just, in order to compare it with the death of sinners. For when they are well persuaded of the infinite difference between the one and the other, they will not hesitate to sacrifice the present life for the future life. They will much prefer the sacrifice of their perishable body to that of their immortal soul. These words are the voice of a dying man in a long and cruel agony; for in those last days, the torments will be long and death delayed.

This completes Book Six, Section II, § 2: Revelation 14:6-13.

§ 3. On the Future Extirpation of Heresies. Chapter 14, Verses 14-20

VERSE 14. And I saw, and behold a white cloud; and upon the cloud one sitting, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a crown of gold, and in his hand a sharp sickle. The description of the harvest and of the vintage spoken of in this chapter contains a kind of difficult and obscure enigma, under which is described the future extirpation of heresies and of the sect of the nations, or of the Turkish Empire. This extirpation will take place under the powerful Monarch and the holy Pontiff. For God will once more console His Church before the dark night of the reign of Antichrist comes.

Now here is the interpretation of this enigma. He whom Saint John saw seated upon the white cloud is the great Monarch of whom we have already spoken more than once. It is said that he is seated upon a white cloud because his reign, designated by the word seated, will be a holy and stable reign, supported by the protection of Almighty God. This Monarch is called like unto the Son of man because of his great virtues, by which he will imitate his

Saviour Jesus Christ. For he will be humble, meek, loving truth and justice, powerful in arms, prudent, wise, and zealous for the glory of God.

He will realise, in a certain way, this prophecy of Isaiah concerning Jesus Christ, Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears; but he shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his reins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them."

"The calf and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall rest together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall thrust his hand into the den of the basilisk. They shall not hurt, nor shall they kill in all my holy mountain, because the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. In that day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a sign before the peoples; the nations shall offer prayers to him, and his sepulchre shall be glorious. Then the Lord shall set His hand again to possess the remnant of His people, who shall have escaped from the Assyrians, from Egypt, from Phathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Sennaar, from Emath, and from the islands of the sea."

"He shall lift up His standard among the nations; He shall gather together the fugitives of Israel, and He shall assemble the dispersed of Juda from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall be destroyed, and the enemies of Juda shall perish; Ephraim shall no longer envy Juda, and Juda shall no longer fight against Ephraim. And they shall fly upon the sea to fall upon the Philistines; together they shall spoil the peoples of the East. Edom and Moab shall submit to their laws, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. The Lord shall make desolate the tongue of the sea of Egypt; He shall lift up His hands over the river; He shall shake it by His mighty breath; He shall strike it and divide it into seven streams, so that men may pass through it on foot. And the remnant of My people who shall have escaped from the Assyrians shall find there a passage, as Israel found one when he came out of Egypt."

What has just been said of Jesus Christ in this prophecy may be applied, in a certain way and by resemblance, to that powerful Monarch of whom Saint John says that he will be like unto the Son of man, having on his head a crown of gold. That is, he will be a great Monarch, rich and powerful, and the ruler of rulers. He will conquer the kings of the nations, and he will be full of the charity of God. Let what has been said of him in chapter 3, concerning the sixth age of the Church, be read again.

And in his hand a sharp sickle. This sickle which the great Monarch will hold in his hand is his great and strong army, with which he will pass through the kingdoms of the nations, republics, and strong places, which he will pierce through and through. It is said that his sickle is sharp because he will engage in no battle without victory resulting for his arms, or great losses and great slaughter for the enemy. It is related of Jonathan and Saul in the Old Testament, 2 Kings 1:22: "The arrow of Jonathan never turned back, nor the sword of Saul returned empty from battle." Now such, in perfection, will be the army of this great and powerful Monarch.

It is said that he holds his sickle in his hand because his army will undertake nothing without his counsels; and he himself will direct it by his plans, as is related of Alexander the Great. It

is also said that he holds his sickle in his hand because his army will obey him perfectly, and will be attached to him and love him in such a way that he will wield it like a staff, and by means of it will accomplish great, astonishing, and admirable things.

II. VERSE 15. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud: Thrust in thy sickle and reap, because the hour is come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. This voice is the voice of one who vehemently exhorts to war and to the harvesting of the cockle of heretics and of the Turks. This angel who will come out of the temple and cry thus is the great and holy Pontiff of whom we have spoken, whom God will raise up in those days. And this Pontiff, moved by a divine inspiration, will exhort and urge this Monarch to undertake this sacred war.

"Thrust in thy sickle," he will say to him; that is, "thy powerful army." "And reap"; that is, cut down, tear up, and uproot the heretics and the barbarians. "For the hour is come to reap, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." This Pontiff will speak this language by revelation; and by these words he will stir the hearts of princes and engage them to unite in order to undertake this war. And God will dispose the hearts of the soldiers in such a way that they will adhere in mind and heart to the enterprise of their powerful Monarch. Because the harvest is ripe - that is, the moment has come to cut down the cockle and cast it into the fire. This is a metaphor which signifies the annihilation and ruin of heresies and barbarism.

VERSE 16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust his sickle into the earth, and the earth was reaped. All these words express the happy success obtained according to the words of the holy Pontiff. And the earth was reaped - for the great Monarch will exterminate, or will subject to his power, the nations of the Turks and of the heretics, and he will occupy their lands.

VERSE 17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. This sickle is another army, which the States of the Church and their allies, closely and strongly united, will gather and send to the aid of the great Monarch. This is why it is said that this other angel came out of the temple; that is, from the States of the Church, of which the temple is the figure. Which is in heaven - that is, in the Church militant, which the word heaven signifies and represents. He of whom it is said, And another angel came out of the temple, will be the great general-in-chief whom this holy Pontiff, of whom we have spoken, will appoint or designate to command that strong army which will be employed to ruin and annihilate the power of the Turks and of the heretics.

VERSE 18. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire; and he cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle: Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vineyard of the earth, because they are ripe. Here there is another voice, exhorting with ardent zeal to act and to fight with strength, in order to win victory over the enemies of the Church who had so greatly humbled her. For the beast, which is the Turkish Empire, must previously occupy Italy, and will extend itself considerably everywhere. It will press Christendom so closely that Christendom, reduced to the last necessity, will also attempt extreme measures and will obtain immense success. It will tear apart the seat, or kingdom, of the beast - that is, the Turkish Empire - and will relegate to hell the perfidy of heretics.

For this reason Saint John designates two kinds of enemies, whom he distinguishes by the words harvest and vintage. The first word signifies the nations of the Turks; and the second designates the heretics. For by the sheaves of straw one understands the barbarous nations; and by the clusters of wild grapes one understands the heretics who boast of being Christians. It is of these latter that Our Lord speaks by allegory in the Gospel, John 15:1-7: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not

fruit, He will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean by reason of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch; he shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he shall burn."

These words concerning the harvest and the vintage spoken of in the Apocalypse are a great and difficult metaphor. For God has always given great kingdoms to the nations of the earth, while He enclosed His chosen people within narrow, restricted, and disadvantageous limits, like a land bordered by a hedge of thorns. And it is in such a state that the Church now finds herself, the vineyard of the God of hosts. Thus, by the harvest - or rather by the sheaves of dried straw, or the cockle - one understands the nations of the earth. And by the grapes which grow upon the wild shoots of the vine, which is the Church of Christ, are literally designated the heretics. For Jesus Christ is the vine; and in His vineyard, which is the Church, two kinds of grapes grow: good grapes, that is, true Christians; and wild grapes, that is, heretics, who are otherwise represented by dry branches.

VERSE 19. And the angel thrust his sharp sickle into the earth, and gathered the vineyard of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. These words insist again upon the prosperity of the Church, and upon the certainty and evidence of the testimony which Saint John gives: that these things will come to pass in their time, for the consolation of the holy Roman Church. For the Lord has spoken, and He will always execute His word.

And cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. This great winepress of the wrath of God is the press, or vat, in which divine justice will exercise its vengeance upon the heretics and upon the barbarous nations. It is into this great winepress that the Lord has always cast both the one and the other, for the consolation of the people of Israel and of the Church of Christ, lest the nations should say: "Where, then, is their God?" Scripture speaks of this wrath or vengeance of God in Psalm 77:65: "The Lord awoke as one out of sleep, and as a mighty man who had been made more terrible by wine. And He struck His enemies behind, and covered them with everlasting confusion and reproach." This winepress will be the extermination and ruin of the barbarous nations and of the heretics. And it is the powerful Monarch who, by the permission and cooperation of the justice, vengeance, and wrath of the Almighty, will cast them into it. For God is the principal cause, and men are, as it were, the instruments of His almighty arm.

VERSE 20. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, for the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs. These words signify a very great shedding of blood, which God, in His wrath and indignation, will cause His Christian armies to pour out from His enemies.

And the winepress was trodden without the city - that is, God will make the effects of His wrath weigh upon these nations outside the holy city and Palestine, which has been reserved to the nations until the son of perdition comes. And blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles. This expression is hyperbolic, and signifies so great a shedding of blood that the horses will almost swim in the blood of the dead and wounded. For when horses swim, they are sunk in the water up to their nostrils. For the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs - this also is a hyperbole, representing the immense slaughter which Christians will make their enemies undergo.

This completes Book Six, Section II, § 3: Revelation 14:14-20, and closes Chapter 14 in its entirety.

CHAPTER 15

The Triumph of the Jews and Christians Who Survive Antichrist

Revelation 15:1–4

§ 4. On the Great Glory and Great Triumph Which the Jews and Christians Who Survive Antichrist Will Render to God Almighty and to His Son Jesus Christ. Chapter 15, Verses 1-4

I. VERSE 1. And I saw in heaven another sign, great and wonderful: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God. The seven angels with their seven plagues will be spoken of in the following chapter.

II. VERSE 2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had overcome the beast and his image, and who had not received the character of his name, standing upon this sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God.

Those who will overcome the beast are: first, the remnant of Christians who, by fleeing and hiding during the persecution of Antichrist, will survive him after his fall into hell. Second, by those who will overcome the beast, one also understands the remnant of the Jews who, after having witnessed the judgment and horrible death of the son of perdition, will survive him, will render glory to God the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ, and will be saved. It is of all these that Daniel speaks when he says in chapter 12, verse 12: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh unto one thousand three hundred thirty-five days."

The sea of glass signifies Baptism; for Christians who are plunged into the water of Baptism become, as it were, transparent like glass, being sanctified by Jesus Christ. It is added that this sea of glass is mingled with fire. Fire represents the Holy Spirit, vivifying and sanctifying souls in Baptism. Now those who will have overcome the beast are represented as standing upon this sea, burning as it were like glass, because after the death of Antichrist, the remnant of the Jews, and the Christians who will have been deprived of Baptism through fear of the tyranny, will be baptised in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

They will confess the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ as being the true Son of God and the true Messiah. When all these come forth from the sacred bath of Baptism, they will be most firmly established in the grace of God and in the confession of Jesus Christ of Nazareth crucified; and they will glorify above all things the Lord of heaven and earth, who created all. This is why they are represented as having the harps of God. By these harps of God one understands the very great praises which these neophytes will sing in honour of God, when they have witnessed His virtue and His omnipotence, and when the truth has been clearly manifested to them.

Moreover, these harps signify the applause and inexpressible joy which they will make burst forth with transport, when they see the great mercy which God has used toward them, by preserving them from so many dangers and from so great a ruin. It is then that they will bless His goodness and His justice, like thousands of harpists playing upon their harps, of whom

mention has been made above.

VERSE 3. And they sang the canticle of Moses, the servant of God, and the canticle of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of ages. By the canticle of Moses is signified the confession of the one true God, who created heaven and earth. And by the canticle of the Lamb, the Apostle designates the confession of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Now these are the two truths which the son of perdition will have banished from the earth.

These two canticles are called the canticle of Moses and the canticle of the Lamb because the first contains faith in the one true God, who created heaven and earth and all that they contain; and because the confession of the Jews concerning this truth relates especially to the Old Testament. The faith in Jesus Christ, on the other hand, applies more specially, and as by appropriation, to the New Testament. Now, since in the last days of the world the remnant of the Jews will be united by the bonds of true faith to the remnant of the Christians, Saint John writes with eloquence: And they sang the canticle of Moses, the servant of God, and the canticle of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of ages.

VERSE 4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and magnify thy name? For thou only art merciful; and all nations shall come and shall adore in thy sight, because thy judgments are manifest. These words contain very great applause which the last Jews and the last Christians will make resound in honour of the divine Majesty, when they see His almighty arm and the judgment which He will have exercised upon the son of perdition and upon his false prophets.

Therefore, first, they will confess the mercy of God manifested in the greatness and wonders of His true works - works which will infinitely surpass and confound the works of Antichrist. For the works of Antichrist will be only impostures, by which the son of perdition will so seduce the Jews and the nations that they will recognise him as the Messiah.

Second, by these words, the last Jews and the last Christians will proclaim God as truly the King of ages, because He alone, by His wisdom, has founded all ages in justice and truth. Now these two great attributes of God, justice and truth, are described in the Old and New Testaments, which these neophytes will then solemnly recognise. The ways of God are truly astonishing and admirable in the manifestation of His works, from the creation of the first man to the last. But these ways of God, however surprising they may appear to us, are founded with admirable wisdom upon His infinite justice and His eternal truth.

This justice and this truth of God are little known to us now, and appear as though veiled before our eyes. They will be still more veiled before the eyes of men who will live in the time of the son of perdition. But after his astonishing death, and especially at the Last Judgment, these two attributes will be manifested in an evident manner. This is why the Jews and the Christians will glorify above all the God of heaven, principally because of the sending of His only Son and of the Holy Spirit upon the earth. And they will say: Thy ways are just and true, O King of ages! And the Jews in particular will praise Him according to the prophecy of Jesus Christ, Matthew 23:39: "For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth, till you say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Third, the Christians and the Jews of the last times will glorify the Lord because of His admirable and impenetrable judgments. For the judgments of God, even in His exterior works which concern the creation, preservation, and government of the human race, are abysses which will not be well known except in the last days, and especially at the Last Judgment. And it is from the manifestation of these judgments that there will then result: first, the fear of the Lord expressed by these words: Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? Second, the indescribable glorification of His Name expressed by these other words: And who shall not

glorify thy name? Third, the confession of the mercy and fidelity of God: For thou alone art merciful. Fourth, because of this manifestation of the judgments of God, all nations, from the origin of the world, will recognise His infinite justice: And all nations shall come. Fifth, finally, all men, and even the damned, will recognise all these divine mysteries, according to these words: And shall adore in thy sight. The demons themselves believe, according to Saint James 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble."

Here Ends the Interpretation of the Venerable Servant of God Bartholomew Holzhauser.